

THE ADVENTURE IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

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Eugene Chadbourne
perverse improv

Squarepusher's
jukebox

James Brown
for beginners

Thomas Fehlmann

Bob Dylan's
voice

Alan Licht

Tied & Tied Trio

John Mayer
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(Cont. Del. 1)



A) Marc Discret
an certain *waiter*
20005
Marc Discret...
electronic guitar

Django's **New Pie**. Buy a big old pie. Using a bloody *sharp* knife hack off the pastry and packaging. Spread the insides of the old pie over your work-surface taking care not to become tainted by *any* part of them. Subtract the additives. Pick out the seed from the chaff. Work the remains with much attention to tiny detail. Throw good and unexpected things into this mixture until it becomes *dense*. Friends may bring spices and other excitables at this point; be unsparing with *these*. Carry this mixture with you all over the world displaying it, tending and honing it regularly. It may stick to the pan, that's OK. *When* you get home, you may find that no shops are *able* to take this product, in which case you should feed it to your close ones. Serve with potatoes and **pride**.

You're si nceel y, Dja n go

- 15/11 London QEH
17/11 Manchester, Royal College of Northern Music
19/11 Norwich Jazz Festival, Assembly House
20/11 Wakefield Sports and Leisure Club
21/11 Birmingham, The Custard Factory

Django Bates will be appearing at the Virgin Megastore, Oxford Street, London, on Tuesday November 10 at 6.00pm with the Quart Nights group



B) Django Bates
Quart Nights 20001
Django Bates, keyboards
& E-flat horn
Ian Bellamy, saxophones
Michael Mondrian, electric bass
Marcus Fraser, drums
Jacqueline Crosthwaite, vocal

C) Bloodcount
Unbound 20003
D) Bloodcount
Discretion 20004
Tim Byrne, alto and
baritone saxophones
& bass. Speed, tenor
saxophone & clarinet
Michael Formanek,
double bass
Joe Black, drums



E) Paraphrase
Visitation Rates 20002
Tim Byrne, alto and
baritone saxophones
Dina Kravtsov, double bass
Tom Rimes, drums

F) Michael Formanek
Am I Bothering You? 20006
Michael Formanek, double bass

BLOODCOUNT "The raw spontaneity of the performances belies the discipline that makes any serious project out as something special in new jazz" *The Wire*

Also available by mail order US only, Bloodcount, Saturation Point 200014

PARAPHRASE

"Visitation Rates is a wild, at times breathless album, a howling banshee wail next to syncopated rhythm switches. There are moments where grief becomes ecstatic." *TCO*

MARC DISCRET "The agility of his performance is consistently fascinating and his musical resourcefulness is endlessly impressive, as he switches idiom without apparent effort. Highly effective, superbly played recording." *The Wire*

MICHAEL FORMANEK "Two excellent examples of personal and inventive free-improvised acoustic jazz with no props, no spile and no intrusive image-the cosmo threat being the formidable American bass-player Michael Formanek. ...Formanek's solo set ranks with the great solo bass performances."

The Guardian
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Tim Byrne, Michael Formanek, Dina Kravtsov, Joe Black, alto and baritone saxophones



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Your track by track guide to this month's free cover mount CD*

THE WIRE



SLICKER

"Prader" (from the hefty album *Confidence In Duber*)

Chicago resident John Hughes — son of the film director — was responsible for the gritty post-rock

of Bill Dug, before the group's demise last year. Now he's back with a new album of stream-of-consciousness Electronicadrum 'n' bass. Essentially a solo studio project, *Confidence In Duber* features vibes by Rick Embach and guitar from Euphone's Ryan Rappys, plus textures culled from samples of crowd roars, farm animals, creaks and crashes to effect the "sculptural approach to making music" favoured by Hughes. "All that was going through my head was, 'Start up, and smooth!'" is the auteur's only clue to the terse rhythmic of "Prader". *Hefty* is distributed by Shellshock.



RHYS CHATHAM

"Hard Edge" (Live mix of a track from the forthcoming Wire Editions album)

Rhys Chatham's composed pieces for multiple electric guitars in the 70s and 80s were cut from similar cloth as the works of Glenn Branca (although stitched together with threads picked up from his earlier associations with LaMonte Young, Jon Hassell, Terry Riley and Tony Conrad). Now resident in Paris, he has been rediscovering trumpet, his first instrument — and boiling on an array of electronic effects to create the kind of exhilarating *Two Electronic* found on the two Ninja Tune EPs *Alon* (with Martin Wheeler) and *Septe*. On this session for the revived Wire Editions label, we hooked Rhys up with some of London's most

lively and dynamic improvisors: 'stereo guitarists' Gary Smith, keyboard/sampler Pat Thomas, bassist Gary Jeff, and drummer Lou Ciccone. "My goal," says Rhys, "is to get in touch with my audiences spirit-body by creating a series of extremely repetitious, mind-deadening sounds. I find that by deadening, possibly

destroying the intellect, one can actually make people feel. I attempt to make people stop thinking for as long as possible when they listen to what I do. I believe that, as time goes by, I stop people from thinking more effectively, at least that's what I hope." For more information on *The Wire Editions* label, e-mail the_wire@ukonline.co.uk



ANGELA JAEGER & DAVID CUNNINGHAM

"Wood And Glass" (from the Piano album *Artificial Homeland*)

Angela Jaeger has travelled far since her experiences in New York's late 70s punk scene. In London, she sang in numerous leftfield music outfits including The Monochrome Set, Bush Terrors, Billy Mackenzie and Pigbag. Last year, after a spell in Barcelona, she returned to NYC. David Cunningham has an equally illustrious history as the founder of avant poppers The Flying Lozards and the Piano label. He recently created sound installations in London and Sydney. "Artificial Homelands are those mysterious territories and mythologies that a transient urbanised species needs to invent — a false memory syndrome, a replicant family photograph," states Cunningham. "The music is derived from slowed-down tapes, loops and treatments, a mix of composed music and improvisation, most of the instrumental material providing Ambient backgrounds, dense harmonically shifting drones graced with Angela's voice providing improvised melodic explorations of the harmonic structures. Sometimes there are words, sometimes it sounds like words, sometimes something else happens." *Piano* is distributed by Pinnacle.



DAF

"Alles Ist Gut" (from the Grey Area Of Plute album *Alles Ist Gut*)

Drilled for two years in the fun-terror tactics of Düsseldorf's early German punk scene, DAF (Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft) burst onto the European pop mainstream



THE NEW



in 1981. In a whirlwind 18 months Robert Gori and vocalist Gabi Delgado-Lopez rose fast, fell hard and then fell apart, leaving behind three Virgin/Anata albums of minimalist electronics pulsating with sex and sweat. According to Gabi, at home DAF alienated both conservatives and radicals. "The people who reacted against DAF could not handle lust or pleasure, they had a really puritanical attitude towards these things." "Alles Ist Gut" is the title track of their breakthrough 1981 album, which, along with *Gold Und Liebe* and *Fur Immer*, has just been reissued. The *Grey Area Q/Mute* is distributed by Vital.

and Charles Hayward (drums). *Meridien* was recorded in January 1998 in New York, and represents an important statement for Howard. "It has come to mean for me the axis on which teeters infinite possibility, the abyss or heaven, rage or joy, love or lust, destruction or brotherhood. My hope is that we can trust ourselves into a chiasm of almost stereotypical beauty and romance, harness the emotional flavour of 'out' playing and direct this into the space of mellifluous beauty and violent catharsis." *Material Sonori* is distributed by Cargo.

processing technique remains the same as the track progresses, but the sound begins sonically and statistically evolving toward more notably digital results." *Mille Plateaux* is distributed by SRD.



TARWATER "V-A" (from the *Kitty-Yo* album *Solar*)

East Berliners Bernd Jesträm and Ronald Lipok have been creating dark assemblages of samples,

loops and found poetry since their early days in art outfit Ornament Und Verbrechen. Despite Lipok's other post as drummer in To Rococo Rot, and Jesträm's soundtrack productions in his Biebleit Studio, the duo produced three albums in as many years: *John Donne*, 11/16 12/10, and *Rabbit Moon* (the latter also accompanied by a remix CD). As ingredients in their fourth, *Solar*, they cite East Coast HipHop, Cool, minimal Japanese Electronics and the compositions of Carl Wilson. Say the duo: "V-A" was recorded at Biebleit Studio in Berlin in January 98 when we were just about to finish the new album. A friend told us that it reminded him of soundtracks for scientific features that he watched on TV when he was a child. Very much so!" *Kitty-Yo* is distributed by SRD.



TOM ZE "Defect 2: Curiosidade" (from the *Luaka Bop* album *Fabrication Defect: Com Defeito De Fabricação*)

Tom Ze is part of the generation of experimental pop musicians (that also includes Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa) which polished its chops in 60s Brazil's godly meetings of samba, politics and avant garde art. 25 years ago, Ze could be found composing music for tape recorders triggered by doorbells, floor sanders, typewriters, blenders and radios. Now, on his third album for David Byrne's Luaka Bop imprint, he continues to push his vision of psychedelic folklore. "Songs are inside of me, like pearls rising in oysters," says Ze. "It takes that grain of sand many years of rubbing before it becomes a pearl. That's why it takes so long for my songs to develop." *Luaka Bop* is distributed by WEA.



JANE DOWE & TERRIE THAEZMLITZ "03/DTD/05:56" (from the *Mille Plateaux* album *Institutional Collaborative*)

California based Terrie Thaezmlitz is one of the most original voices in contemporary Electronics. On albums such as *Cosmos Cosmoseau*, *Means From An End*, and the Kraftwerk tribute *Die Roboter Akutia*, plus the 12" released on his Cosmoseau label, Thaezmlitz uses textual motifs to explore theoretical issues surrounding the creation and reception of music. *Institutional Collaborative* documents a sound-file exchange with journalist/computer musician Dowe. According to the duo: "Track titles for *Institutional Collaborative* are based on a formula of 'track number/exchange path of source materials/time'; so the 'DTD' in '03/DTD/05:56' refers to a three-part audio exchange starting with Dowe, then Thaezmlitz and Dowe again. We did most of the work on this track in June of 1997. One of *Institutional Collaborative*'s themes is the collapse of the Ambient marketplace of the late 80s and early 90s, and how that conditions the production and reception of electroacoustic music. There are several allusions to 'marketable' Ambient music, some more obvious and satirical than others, such as the 'Plog in a dropy cave' quality of this track's initial generated sounds. The primary



POWERFIELD "Block" (from the forthcoming *Parastatic* album *Electronic Electric Electronic*)

Drummer and electronic percussion pioneer Joe Gallivan

has been a mercurial presence in the field of avant jazz for over 30 years. His career has included stints with Larry Young during the keyboardist's most inspired electric phase (documented on *Love Cry World*), and as percussionist with Gil Evans. He currently runs his New Jazz label from Hawaii. A recent London trip saw him thrown into this power electronics session with 'sereno guitarist' Gary Smith.



MERIDIEM "Interference" (from the *Materiali Sonori* album *Meridien*)

For this studio project, singer, poet and writer Percy Howard — hooked up with the winning team of Bill Lawwell (bass), Fred Frith (guitar)

*MR Sincere apologies to overseas newspaper readers, but due to unavoidable licensing restrictions, this month's free CD is only available in the UK and to overseas subscribers. For further information, please contact The Wire. UK newspaper readers: please tell your newsagent if your free CD is missing from the cover of this issue.

and improviser Pat Thomas, for a CD scheduled to appear at the end of this year. ☐ Porotactis is distributed by Harmonia Mundi



SAM PREKOP
"Showrooms" (from the forthcoming Thrill Jockey album)

Sam Prekop will be known to most as singer with The Sea And Cake, but for his debut solo album he was joined by some leading lights of Chicago's fertile experimental rock scene: Archer Prewitt, Chad Taylor of Chicago Underground Orchestra, and Josh Abrams of Town & Country on bass. Organ and backing vocals come courtesy of Windy City prime mover Jim O'Rourke, who also produced the as yet untitled album. ☐ Thrill Jockey is distributed by Cargo



PUPPY
"Hot Juice" (Sprawl Imprint, previously unreleased)

Dave Hodgson, aka Puppy, was born in the UK Midlands in 1969, and after various jobs including studio assistant with Trevor Horn, collaborations with Kevin Saunderson, CJ Macintosh and Tim Simenon, now finds himself writing computer games for Microsoft in Seattle. "When I start a track," comments Hodgson of his solo Electronica, "I generally have a pretty good idea of how I want it to sound. By the time it's finished, however, it always seems to be somewhere entirely different. 'Hot Juice' began life after I'd been listening to The Propellerheads every day on my drive to work...". Puppy's debut album, *Horizontol*, is due for release on The Sprawl Imprint early in 1999. ☐ The Sprawl Imprint is distributed by SRO



JAD FAIR & YO LA TENGO
"Minnesota Plan Claims Monkey Bowled Perfect Game" (from the Matador album Strange But True)

Jad Fair's Half Japanese set the standard for many US lo-fi groups over the last ten years; the circle was completed four years ago when he was asked to play on a bill with HJ fans Yo La Tengo. From this meeting, *Strange But True* spontaneously took shape over a two-year period, with the participants jamming material to tape as quickly as possible. Here's what Yo La's Ira Kaplan has to say of the chosen track: "Third and final song on *Strange But True* concerning monkeys. Recorded a few years ago in our practice space on

the site of what is currently a vacant lot. Guitar players' 'clam' left on the track to prove first-take authenticity." ☐ Matador is distributed by Vital



THE PASTELS
"Leaving This Island (Jim O'Rourke Remix)" (from the Domino album Illuminist)

Stephen Pastel, Katrina Mitchell and Agg are a longstanding fixture on the Glaswegian independent scene: their first single, "Heavens Above", was issued in 1982, quickly followed by two 7"s on Alan McGee's fledgling Creation label. Since then, The Pastels have survived numerous line-up changes and lay-offs, surfacing occasionally — as they did earlier this year, with their *Illuminist* LP. This track is taken from the remix arrangement from Jim O'Rourke, who says: "Some music seems ready to be remixed in a more structural way, being some kind of cracked mirror. But for me, 'Leaving This Island' was already so perfect, I thought it was best to do a 'version' rather than 'remixing' it. Any chance to do a string arrangement I jump at, especially for such a beautiful song." ☐ Domino is distributed by Vital



BADAWI
"Final Warning" (from the Asphodel EP Final Warning)

"This was a concept I was working on doing Moroccan rhythms electronically," is how Ras Mesnal, aka Badawi, describes his *Final Warning* EP. Ras does indeed bring the fundamentalist zeal of Islamic percussion to the libidinal sound palette, and as well as recording under the Badawi banner, works with DJ John Ward in the bottom-heavy Sub Dub. ☐ Asphodel is distributed by SRO



LABRADFORD
"V (Harold Budd Remix)" (Blatt First, previously unreleased)

Precision, the debut 1994 release by this Virginia trio, was one of the original "isolationist" guitar/drone works of the 90s. Since then, Mark Nelson, Carter Brown and Robert Donne have ploughed a steady furrow in quest of the numinous, tranquil mood pieces in which they specialise — an aural analogue to the still melancholy of a Rothko canvas. They have released three further albums on Blatt First — *Labradford*, *A Stable Reference* and *Mi Medio Moravia*, which are being reissued later this year in the wake of the recent Festival Of Drifting in London, which they co-curated. This Harold Budd mix will be available on a limited 12". ☐ Blatt First is distributed by Vital

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Candida Doyle & Steve Mackey,
Smith Quartet & guests

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10.15pm FreeStage performance: Spring Heel
Jack, with Paul Hornbill and Jason Pierce
(Spiritualized) performing specially created
work plus tracks from forthcoming Spring Heel
Jack and Orbital releases

Saturday 24 October

The Broad

with Susan Stenger, Gavin Bryars,
David Thomas, John Tilbury,
Pan Sonic, Bruce Gilbert (Wire)
& others
Phoenix Dance, Sardonio

perform works by John Cage including the
world premiere of two specially commissioned
dance works, plus performances of Musicircus
at 3pm & 6.30pm, forum (5.30) & films
throughout the foyer.

Tuesday 27 October

John Zorn

Modern chamber music

Saturday 31 October

**Glenn Branca's
Electric Guitar Swarm**

FreeStage 5pm: Ben Neill & Page Hamilton;
Marc Ribot

Sunday 1 November

London Symphony Orchestra

Plays John Adams

Monday 23 November

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editor's idea

A refrigerated lorry, belonging to F&R Frozen Foods, parked round the corner from The Wire office. On the side panels and tailgate is stencilled the legend "Frozen • Chilled • Ambient". A Friday evening episode of the BBC's GP soap *Dangerfield* with a story line involving an unhinged cellist and a noisy neighbour, titled "Silence Is A Rhythm Too". A Saturday morning radio feature on mountaineering, during which it is revealed that certain characteristic sections of particularly tricky rock face are known by the names 'Live End' and 'White Light White Heat'. Where's all this heading? Nowhere in particular, except I never thought I'd see the day when Thomas Koner, The Slits, electronic-era Miles Davis and The Velvet Underground would exert an influence, however subliminal, on the worlds of frozen food distribution, prime-time TV drama, and mountaineering respectively.

If I'd had access to it in advance, perhaps I could have used the above information as evidence to support my (admittedly feeble) assertion, made during a recent panel discussion on the current, possibly dubious state of the avant garde, that 'specialist' music filters into mass culture in ways more mysterious and less quantifiable than the career of Michael Nyman. The location for this lukewarm debate was a 16th century castle turned modern art gallery on the Canary island of Lanzarote, which is a far more interesting fact than anything that was actually discussed. I'm going to write about the panel, and the music festival it was attached to, in next month's Global Ear section, so that's all from Lanzarote for this month.

Another random thought: if the Internet is the future of music retail, as someone rashly suggested during that panel discussion (hell, it might even have been me), then how come on a Saturday afternoon, there isn't room to swing a cat, let alone get within easy reach of the rack dividers, in any of the record emporia that are scattered throughout the end of streets surrounding Wire HQ?

Not that I can actually find anything in these damn places when I do finally elbow my way to the front of the browsers.

For instance: I've been searching for a new (ish) four LP compilation of tracks originally released on the cusp of the decade by the unparalleled New York House label Nu Groove. I've stared at the browsers in both

megastores and backstreet holes-in-the-wall, tried to second-guess the twisted logic with which rack jockeys apply their 'track', rifled through dividers marked 'Techno', 'House', 'Garage', 'Trance', 'Soul & Dance', hell, even 'Nu Groove', but can I find a copy of it anywhere? Forget it. I am now beginning to doubt the record's very existence, despite the fact that I first heard about it via a column written for another publication by an otherwise trustworthy journalist with whom I am vaguely acquainted.

Why am I making so much effort to track down a compilation of old House tracks, most of which I already own on 12" vinyl? Because Nu Groove was the business, one of the unacknowledged legislators of the global electronic network. At the height of Acidhouse madness, the label's productions by the likes of Bobby Konders, the Burrell Brothers and Vandal (the collage-popper Vanessa Daou in collaboration with huggan-Patten) proposed an alternative model for electronic dance music, one which was flexible enough to accommodate elliptical spoken word passages, digi-dub, fusion-inspired keyboard jams, and which was subsequently adopted and adapted by labels such as Warp, Basic Channel, R&S and more.

With regard to the above, it has been brought to my attention that certain observers of this column think I spend an inordinate amount of time discussing old music, (although I'll wager much of it is new to you, so what's the difference?) So let me now point you in the direction of this month's free cover mount CD: the second volume in our ongoing series of *Wire Tapper* compilations showcasing various strands of new and undiscovered music. From blustering noise to near-silence, the CD contains something for everyone, as I believe the saying goes. But once again, we must apologise to our overseas newstand readers for the fact that their issue of the magazine will arrive without a copy of The Wire Tapper stuck to the front. As we have said before, it's a lousy situation, but due to the territorial licensing restrictions which apply to such promotional CDs, there ain't a damn thing we can do about it. If you are an overseas reader, the only way to ensure you get future volumes of The Wire Tapper (we have three more planned for next year) is to take out a subscription. Does that sound like a bribe? It isn't: it's just sheer good sense. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The December issue of The Wire: on sale Tuesday 24 November

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perversely matched, but Spanish Fly, led by Sex
Mob's Steven Bernstein, plays with a degree of
wit and style not usually associated with such a
brash dismantling of musical genres



BRAXTON & PAVONE Seven Standerds

Expertly manipulating the tension between
structure and freedom, these two giants of free-jazz
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Harder than the rest

Just thought I would send some well deserved praise to Rob Young and The Wire in general for yet another A1 edition. The Harder! Faster! Louder! feature (*The Wire* 176) was a welcome insight to this realisation and growing interest in 'experimental chaos'.

It's about time more people realised that electronic music is becoming hackneyed and predictable – and all the more reason for soundsmiths the length and breadth of Britain to start doing what THEY want to do, instead of following the same tawdry blueprints: shiny France CDs, predictable club nights for rebels without a clue. The best nights in Manchester over the last three years have been Disobey (Boyd Rice, Stock, Hausen & Walkman, etc.), the Toolshed at the Night & Day Cafe, and of course Matt Thompson's irregular nights all over.

As one of the luminaries stated in the article: the ideas have gone before, but with the new spangled technology, the world is our oyster! As for tossers like Klaus Lynggaard (Letters, same issue), people like that should stick to reading *NME* and *Smash Hits*. So come on people! Set up your samplers, plug in your Arps and Moogs, and pour petrol all over them! But don't forget to record the results! I mean, come on... Where else can you find a magazine in your local newsagent that has a letter from Chris and Casey, a feature on Chris Watson, then mentions Kenneth Anger and Bobby Cupid? Beauséjour! – jackpot!

Tim Jones Manchester

Great to see *The Wire* going from strength to strength with yet another of its periodic articles rounding up the latest drop-names making up a shuffling scene defined by its allegiance to sonic nihilism. Very brave of you to put three scally bastards on the cover. Have you heard "Jamaican Record Theft" by Hail-Caste Underclass Crack-Deal? It's so hard and radical it jumped back last week and was last seen on some waste ground near Piccadilly Station giving a discarded set of decks some welly before beating a student up on a late-night bus.

Nice to see an article on Toru Takemitsu too. I've always thought he was an alien. Must have been the way he could drink a lot and wear a nice blue suit whilst remaining delicately poised, like pollen blown on the draughts of air coming from the hand-driers in the bogs.

Simon Fay Glasgow

Deadbeat descendant

Three questions. Are you really sure that Ravi Coltrane is John Coltrane's son (*The Wire* 176)? Don't you think more research should be done on this hot and

important topic? Maybe some thorough genetic analysis like what Bill Clinton got for the stain on the dress? You deserve a massive point deduction for your heavily-handed treatment of the younger Coltrane. Anyone care to listen to the music?

Nils Jacobson Boston, USA

To the core

Your 100 Records list (*The Wire* 175) may have exposed my ignorance of music. (I only own two of them) but it does give me a chance to show off some of my other knowledge. Russell Mills, in his entertaining piece on Silver Apples, presumes that their name was inspired by the Morton Subotnick composition *Silver Apples Of The Moon*. This may be true. But it's also possible that they found the name in the same place that Subotnick did, which is the final verse of WB Yeats's poem *The Song Of Wandering Aengus*. What this has to do with any of the referenced music, I have no idea.

Patrick MacArdle Berkeley, USA

Byrd on a wire

It's nice to see that I'm not the only one who still remembers Joseph Byrd and *The United States Of America* (100 Records, *The Wire* 175). However, besides his arranging and conducting work on Ry Cooder's jazz, Byrd did make two other albums: *A Christmas Yet To Come* (1975) and *Yonkee Transcendental* (1976), both on Takoma. Fine albums (and nice covers, to boot) which present electronic renditions of a traditional repertoire, adding new insights into Byrd's work. Plus, they sport a richly detailed and pioneering use of electronics (Amp 26CD and early Oberheim equipment): lovers of analogue syntheses will have a field day!

Giuseppe Colli Catania, Italy

Northern exposure

Thanks for an informative Primer on musique concrète and electroacoustics (*The Wire* 174). Worth mentioning in addition is Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim's work from the late 60s on *Electric*, recently reissued on the Rune Grammofon label. Nordheim went on to work at Warsaw's Studio Experimentalne (Polish radio), where the 'electroacoustic scene' merged the German and French 'schools' into a distinct language. And even more good news: a remix CD of *Electric*, by Basiphene and DeathProd, is scheduled for release later this autumn.

Harald Ness Bergen, Norway

Down Roza

In response to your review of Roza's performance at the LHC's Seventh Annual Festival of Experimental Music (*The Wire* 173). I guess the life of professional critics has its down days just like anybody else, and that must mean being forced to stay and listen to several days of music when they would rather hysterically rush for the exits. For the record, if "read and true" means performing in London every ten years, then we are guilty as charged. We think it important to note that the composition/improvisation using cue cards to signal written material that Baba Koff found so "creatively bankrupt" was entitled *Witch Gong Game* and was composed by Barry Guy. We also performed the lovely piece *Face In A Crowd* by Lindsay Cooper.

Jon Raskin, Row Saxophone Quartet Oakland, USA

Flight of fancy

Edwin Pouncey's review of Frank Zappa's *Mystery Disc* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 176) sent me searching my record collection for Captain Beefheart's 'Metal Man Has Won His Wings'. I was suffering from the influence of others' mishearing of the title. After finding my copy of the bootleg *Metal Man Has Honored Wings*, featuring this very track, recorded in 1963 or 1964 by The Scots, and featuring both Beefheart and Zappa, it was time for some attentive listening to some very unclear vocals. I'm now convinced you got it right: there are no 'homer's wings' audible, which should be no surprise to anyone. I have to say this is one forgettable track, and should have been left in the basement where it was found. Both Zappa and Beefheart would be long forgotten if this was the best they could do.

Paul Muttall Wellington, New Zealand

Sticky subject

I'm glad that you recommended Mouse On Mars's *Glam album* in your last issue (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 176), but in addition to it being a beautiful piece of work, it may also contain the smell of the lushest toffee imaginable – I could happily sniff the album for entertainment in a power cut (maybe a slight exaggeration).

The Col feature (same issue) was welcome until I found that their album single had already sold out – a new occurrence. I hold you responsible.

Richard Faith via e-mail

Correction

Issue 176 In the Directory, the e-mail address for VVMF should have read vwm@item.co.uk

soundings

Festivals, happenings and special events



Newband perform Harry Parich

American Pioneers

As part of Inventing America, London's Barricade continues its series of concerts from the canon of Southern 'innovators, rule breakers and iconoclasts'. This month's highlights include a specially arranged music programme by Glenn Branca and his Electric Guitar Swarm group (31 October); while earlier on the same day there are free performances by Ben Neill/PAGE Hamilton, and Marc Ribot. In a troplet of classic Minimalism, John Adams conducts the UK premiere of his Piano Concerto (1 November). Philip Glass supervises his Gnsberg-influenced Hydrogen Jukebox (23), and The City Of London Sinfonia play Steve Reich's Desert Music and orchestral Frank Zappa (26). Henry Rollins delivers a spoken word trade (9), and Newband set up Harry Parich's original instruments (27). Finally, Minimalist granddaddy La Monte Young directs his Theatre Of Eternal Music: Brass And String Ensemble for the first time on British soil (1 December). For full details, call 0171 638 8891. In a triplet, Mark Webber's parallel series of underground American film continues at the Lux Cinema between 1-8 November call 0171 684 0201.

Now Ninety8

In the second of The Wire's Adventures In Modern Music nights as part of this Nottingham multimedia festival, we host an array of vanguard live Electronica To Rococo Rot, Rhy Chatham, Pluramon, and a special film soundtrack by Radioboy aka Matt Herbert (Nottingham Matt Cross, 1 November, 7pm, 55/54). Meanwhile, Digital Clotting hooks up a live Net jam between Carl Craig in Detroit and 4 Hero (The Bomb, 30 October), and Kaffe Matthews plays her brand of live sampling Ambient (Angel Row Gallery, 4 November). For details on the whole programme, call 0115 941 9419. Website: www.nowfestival.org.uk

Oris London Jazz Festival

The usual galaxy of international jazzers and World Musicians will be descending on the capital for this year's concert extravaganza, which takes place at various locations including the South Bank Centre and Barbican (16-17 November). Blasting off with a drum-centric performance by The Art Ensemble's Lester Bowie and South African drum ambassador Louis Moholo (17 November), you can also hear fusion pioneer Chick Corea (7), acclaimed Brazilian vocalist Virginia Rodrigues (9), punk jazz iconoclast Billy Jenkins improvising film accompaniments (10), Evan Parker with London Saxophone (11), and John McLaughlin (11). The LMC present three Nuts Das Bruts, featuring Phil Minton Noel Aochote, Erik Minkinen, Caroline Kraebel, John Edwards and Mark Sanders (The Spitz, 6-8). Also in town will be Joshua Redman, Joe Lovano, Glen Allen Nton Sawhney, John Surman, Cheo Marks, Alex Balanescu and more. Info line: 0171 405 5974

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

This year celebrating 21 years of fostering 20th century music on the good people of Huddersfield, the festival's special guests include US heavyweights George Crumb, Elliott Carter, Steve Reich and Terry Riley. Highlights include the installation House (a collaboration between poet Simon Armitage, Scanner and theatre designers Louise and Wils Wilson), the UK premiere of Tan Dun's opera Marco Polo (22 November), Terry Riley and bassist Stefano Scodanibbio in improvising mode (28), Newband performing Harry Parich (29), and Steve Reich and Benji Karol's new video opera Hinderburg (29). Huddersfield (various venues), 18-29 November. Box Office: 01484 430528

Planet Tree Festival

Contemporary total music is the theme of this London festival (14-20 November). The highlights will

undoubtedly be the rarely performed four-hour Morton Feldman chamber piece *For Philip Guston* (played by John Tibury, Dorothy Stone and Simon Allen), and a solo piano recital by Terry Riley (20). Other nights include a tribute to Erik Satie (4), festival organiser Lawrence Ball's Music + Spook/Sing/Play (7), Riley keyboard music played by John Tibury (11), Yonty Solomon performing piano music by Ives and Sorabji (13), and the hyperdense piano music of Keith Barnard (18). Concerts take place at London's Conway Hall, Burgh House and Rudolf Steiner House, call 0171 420 1000 for tickets

Termite Festival

Leeds's long running Improv venue hosts a three night scream-up, with noise from Costes, Acidflick, Death Squad, Radiosonde and Chapter 23 (6 November), electroacoustics from Michael Prime, Geert Feytoons, Project DARG and Jowrow Productions (7), and Termité stalwarts Beck/Hesson/Fell, plus Helmut Lemke, John Jasnock and Rob Danton (8). Leeds Royal Park, CJS and Fenton, info 0113 275 6802

Ballroom International

Strange title for this weekend rock/Electronica clash in Berlin, organised by Berlin's Kitz-Yo and City Slang labels (28-29 November). On the Saturday, Tanwater Couch, Ryoji Ikeda, Pole, Sola, Prohibition and Peaches & Wolfson play live, with DJing from The Wire Sound System and DJ Bleed. Sunday's performers are Sebadoh, To Rococo Rot, Karle, Laub, Phoneheads and Verma, with deejaying from Romme & Clyde, DJ Hane and Hybrid. Berlin Volksbue, info 00 49 30 283 914 50, or e-mail kitty-yolberner@urf.de

Total Music Meeting

Still in Berlin, the excellent FMP organisation hosts their regular Improv fest (4-8 November), including Louis Sluvis, Jean-Marc Montero, King Ubu Orchestra, Masha Meneghin, Alexander Von Schlippenbach, Matthew Shio, Vinko Globokar and more. Berlin Podewil, info 00 49 30 394 1756 fax 00 49 30 394 2502

Music Unlimited

This year's music meeting in Wels, Austria celebrates the interzone where jazz collides with post-rock and fractured noise. Appearing over three days are The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Ken Vandermark's OKV Trio, Tied & Tieded Trio, Techno Animal, Calexico, Harnd Drake, Leo Smith, Richard Teitelbaum & Gunter Müller and more. Wels Alter Schlachhof, 6-8 November, info 00 43 7242 56375, e-mail wasschoeich-schlachhof@pvt.telecom.at

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Death Row Records is one of the most successful and also one of the most controversial record labels in history. Violence, gang feuds, threats, corruption and intimidation were business as usual under the guidance of 300 pound CEO Marion "Suge" Knight. Music journalist and ex-rapper Ronin Ro lays bare the full story behind this influential label, including the still unsolved murders of Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G., as well as charting Suge Knight's rise to power.

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THE SPECTACULAR RISE AND
VIOLENT FALL OF
DEATH ROW
RECORDS

Rob Mazurek

Chicago's silent revolution

Chicago's avant scene is a vast polymusical collective that periodically gels into smaller units, like *Gestr Del Sol*, *Tortoise*, *Isotope 217*, *Chicago Underground Orchestra*, *Directions*, *Pullman*, *Brokeback*, *Super ESP*, ...

The scene might be characterised by its limitless permutations from a tight pool of players, but one name in particular crops up over and over — Rob Mazurek. As yet, outside Chicago he is still mostly known as a solid songwriter and accomplished cornet player in the hard bop tradition. His three records on the Dutch Hip label inlieu compare with the Blue Note classics of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard. However, Mazurek has all but shed his hard bop skin, as his forthcoming projects confirm. "It's certainly not bad music," the soft-spoken Mazurek says of his earlier work. "It's just music that's trying to sound like something else. Whereas, in all the new stuff I'm doing, I'm trying to go with what I hear in my head and let that dictate what the music is. I feel like I'm finally making music that means a lot."

Mazurek's claim is borne out by the marvellous new *Thrill Jockey* release, *12' Of Freedom*, recorded with percussionist Chad Taylor under the name Chicago Underground Duo, and the even more out-there Chicago Underground Trio CD forthcoming from Delmark. The duo disc opens with expressionistic peels, smeared and rippled by brass sent out into the surrounding void. The second track bears no trace of Mazurek's cornet, only pedaled and slowly alternating piano and

vibe tones that pierce the silence and then retreat back into it. "Morion Feldman has been my major influence in the last three or four years," Mazurek explains. "The way he constructs things is sublime. Coming out of the background that I have, it's hard to break that mould of wanting to play a lot of notes. It's a battle just to try! The idea of thinking about where you're going to play colours within the time you're playing — that's so important to me now, because I'm into trying to get the music to be as introspective as possible, it's hopefully, a spiritual way."

Feldman's angular minimalism is also discernible on the trio record. But more striking is the glimpse it offers of Mazurek's newfound interest in electronic music. "Teletransportation Unit 3", for example, recalls Sun Ra's early 60s compositions, with its wavering sci-fi Moog assisted by organ drones and vibraphone accents. Mazurek himself sees a link with several masters of electronic composition. "I don't really consider myself a real trumpet player, I'm just interested in sound," he says. "And I think that's what the next record's going to be — a solo thing that's almost all electronic. If I play the cornet, you might not be able to tell."

What accounts for this sudden shift in emphasis? Mazurek attributes it to his friendship with Tortoise guitarist Jeff Parker, who introduced him to Chicago's experimental network. With Parker, Mazurek began hosting a series of weekly workshops that gradually

coalesced into a quintet oddly dubbed Chicago Underground Orchestra. "It doesn't have to be 50 or 100 people for it to be an orchestra," Mazurek explains, alluding to a remark by Cecil Taylor associate Bill Dixon. "Each player is an orchestra unto themselves because they're responsible for all the things that an orchestra would be responsible for, rather than the normal thing where you're a horn player and so you play the melody or solo, or you're a drummer and so you keep time."

The Orchestra's debut, *Playground*, is a rich and accomplished record, even if it doesn't quite bear out the 'orchestra' concept. "It's a pretty regular record," Mazurek confesses. "Conceptually speaking, it doesn't go as far as we wanted to take it." The duo and trio releases, however, provide ample evidence of Mazurek's new direction. Mazurek adds mischievously that Parker has begun another group also called Chicago Underground Trio. "That's the whole concept to use the same name for all these different projects."

CHRISTOPH COX *Chicago Underground Duo's 12' Of Freedom is out now on Thrill Jockey*

Kaija Saariaho

Shivering timbres

Once billed as 'The Lonely Fifer', Kaija Saariaho is one of the leading composers of the post-Stockhausen generation. Certainly there's a coolness, an emotional detachment in her music that is very Finnish. But 'singeminded' would be a better description of a career dedicated to combining live instrumental resources and Ircam-inspired electronics. From Helsinki she moved to Freiburg, Germany, to study with Brian Ferneyhough, and then to Paris — and each of these musical worlds is reflected in her music.

The desire to work at Ircam precipitated her move at the end of her student days. "I started to work with computers in 1982," she says. "Then, the situation was just amazing. When you wanted to do something more refined, you needed a very big computer... Now, most of my work I'm interested in I can do at home." The shimmering *Sir Apollinaire Gardens* for percussion and electronics, on her latest CD *Private Gardens*, was created on her own PDA, using recordings of instruments made in Japan. A series of impressions of gardens she visited in Kyoto, it's her tribute to Toru Takemitsu.

Saariaho's soundworld jumps from captivating textures of the utmost delicacy and refinement — reflecting a French concern with sonority and timbre — to the more industrial end of New Complexity, as for chamber orchestra, tape and live electronics, realised in 1986-87 at Ircam, is a tough, gritty *Isos*, while the exquisite *Private Gardens* is at the opposite end of the spectrum. She focuses more often on timbre and harmony than gesture and drama.

"The most interesting thing for me at Ircam at this moment is their specialisation program," she comments,

Rob Mazurek (right) with Chad Taylor in Chicago Underground Duo...



steeped in the music of Sibelius — “such a self-evident part of our musical culture,” she says. But it’s something she had to get away from. There’s the same suffusion with cool, clear textures. “Our location is very special, and especially the light condition.” Maybe this explains her liking for “grey sounds contrasting with very bright, clean sounds” (luminous greyness and clarity — the search for opposites **ANDY HAMILTON** Private Gardens is out now on *Online*. The Complete Record Co are reissuing *Saanaho’s* back catalogue).

Thomas Fehlmann

Berlin connection

Spanning 20 years, Thomas Fehlmann’s career connects with some unlikely points on the electronic music diaspora. His chronology links the early systems music of Robert Fripp, the rhythm-physics of Detroit Techno, and the ginja space dub of The Orb and Sun Electric, among others. More often a ghost presence than a ‘face’ on the scene, he is one of the diaspora’s most valuable fixers.

After 20 years helping make other people’s music happen, Berlin-based Fehlmann has finally released his debut solo LP, *Flow 90-98*. Recorded between engagements over the last eight years, the LP showcases Fehlmann, in his own words, “experimenting and trying new approaches, doing things you’re not always able to do when you are with other people”.

While not exactly revolutionising Electronics, *Flow 90-98* is a beautiful and accomplished review of its possibilities. It takes in the melodic chimes and sighs of “Hermosta” (Black Dog in outer space), the brooding electronic dub of “Banda”, and the bittersweet clarity of “Face The Day”, which sounds like one of Juan Atkins’s finest moments. “Schizophrenia”, which features his longtime collaborator Moritz Von Oswald (aka Maatoo, of Basic Channel fame), closes the album in a cumulus of gorgeous synth textures.

The idea to finally release a solo album came last year, after Fehlmann and friends from Berlin’s Ambient Ocean Club started a radio show. “Before that, my collection of tracks was just growing and growing — I wasn’t planning to put out an LP or anything,” says Fehlmann. “But on the radio show we’d play some Hawaiian record next to Plaid, and through that I got to see how you can sequence different styles together, and just play the bits of records you liked”.

A meeting with Robert Fripp in Hamburg in the late 70s inspired Fehlmann to form Palais Schaumburg with Holger Hiller. Though they experimented with tape loops and early sampling techniques, their mobocracy differed from UK sound saboteurs like Cabaret Voltaire. Fehlmann explains, in that Schaumburg were “not issue-political, but artistic-political. We set ourselves certain aims. For instance, if our music started

remind us of anything else, we had to scrap it”.

Fehlmann was upset when Hiller chose to leave straight after the release of their first LP. “When we started the band, it was like a marriage,” he says, “and if someone was doing something outside the band you would almost feel betrayed. But working within the electronic field I began to see the music as project based, rather than group based, so collaboration with outsiders was something to be pleased about”.

Moving to Berlin in 1988, Fehlmann teamed up again with his former Schaumburg colleague, Moritz Von Oswald. It was a good time to be in Berlin: the Wall was about to come down and the first wave of Detroit Techno was beginning to break in Berlin clubs.

“Palais Schaumburg were always dance music, we were very influenced by disco,” he says. “So this music was a dream come true. It was these sexy beats but without having shit music on the top. It was fulfilling”.

Early champions of Detroit, Fehlmann and Von Oswald started collaborating with Motor City pioneers

“which is a new way to make use of our knowledge of how sound is moving and changing in space.” She used this program in *Contra*, for soprano and electronics (also on *Private Gardens*). “In a concert there are several loudspeakers around the audience, and they create a changing space which I find really interesting. You cannot hear the electronic sounds as coming from the speakers. You really experience a new kind of space, which is constantly transformed around you”.

Saanaho admits she’s a modernist. “I cannot understand the postmodern collage technique,” she asserts. “It’s not for me. I would like all the music that I write to come through me, so that I filter it.” But she rejects any New Complexity affiliation — “I cannot stand these labels!” Certainly her music doesn’t have the visceral, emotional intensity of the Ferneyhough-Finnissy-Dillon axis. “Complex tendencies” is a more tentative description, but maybe it’s best just to refer to “contemporary modernism”.

“Spectralism” is a description Saanaho is happier with. She uses computer analysis to produce harmonic structures out of sound spectra — preferably with pitched instrumental sounds as the basis, since environmental sounds are too complex. “My harmonic structures are rather simple,” she says. Relatively speaking, of course. “Noise physically would be, for example, wind, meaning that there is no harmonic spectrum.” But sometimes she has environmental or natural sounds in her music. “It can be a component of creating more musical tensions, of different kinds of levels of contrast, and so on.” A favoured technique involves resolving from noise to pitched harmonics, step by step.

Like Jonathan Harvey — the composer perhaps closest in outlook to Saanaho — she favours the combination of live instruments and electronics. “I enjoy working with musicians — what they bring cannot really be replaced. On the other hand, I see the electronic part of my music these days as somehow extensions of the instruments, but it depends always on the work. I make many works with no electronics at all.” Examples include *Loconesse De L’Aile* for solo flute, enriched by hissing, sung and spoken sounds.

Finally there’s the fact that she’s a Finnish composer,



like Blake Baxter, Eddie "Flashin'" Foulkes and the original Underground Resistance duo of Jeff Mills and Mike Banks. Fehlmann introduced the UR duo to their heroes Kraftwerk during a trip to Berlin in 1991.

"That night Jeff was playing at Tresor and Ralf and Florian came down to hear him," recalls Fehlmann. "They connected straight away, they'd never heard anything like Jeff. It was an amazing moment, and Mike said to me, 'This is the closest I ever came to God'."

Despite his close relationship with UR, Fehlmann distances himself from the German producers they inspired. Moving to the opposite extreme, he began working with Alex Paterson in The Orb and FFWO, an Orb spin-off project also featuring Robert Fripp. "I never liked hammering Techno," asserts Fehlmann. "It was like everything was possible again with Ambient. I like extreme music but not hard music. If you listen to New or Can, it's extreme, but it's not hard. Innovators like UR were good but I hate the clones."

As 3MB, Fehlmann and Von Oswald worked with Juan Atkins on Jazz Is The Teacher. Atkins was so impressed with the duo's "precision" that he recorded his first Model 500 LP at Von Oswald's studio.

"The precision comes from our German-ness," laughs Fehlmann. "The Orb always take the piss out of me because of it, but they love it as well. But I also like the element of chance in music, and I try to have my studio set up so that unexpected things can happen."

His studio method mirrors his approach to life, where music makes sense of the unknown. "When I went to Detroit it was a real education because it made me realise that everything I'd ever thought is relative," he says. "But then I meet these people from a completely different background and we connect. It made me realise what a great communication factor music is."

PINE SMALLCROSS Flow 90-98 is out now on Apollo



Their recent triple CD set, *Return Visit To Rock Mass*, blew away any preconceived ideas about a Tokyo sound. No Blue Cheer heaviness or Frisco Ballroom freakin' here — instead you get around 60 contemplative pocket symphonies, compounded from beat-up acoustic strings and bubbling brass. *Rock Mass* is both a personal peak for the Kudos, and the summation of 20 years' underground activity.

They trace their underground route back to Tokyo's legendary Minor club in the late 70s. "It was unbelievable," Toni enthuses. "A magnet for any people interested in this new kind of music, like Key Hano. All these musicians who had begun to gather there inevitably began to form bands."

Fired by the club's intense atmosphere, Toni formed the short-lived Machine Gun Tango and played regular duo dates with Hano. When Hano began to concentrate on his group Fushitsusha, the Kudos formed Noise in 1979, with Toni playing "Sotter Ray" style organ behind Reiko's guitar, trumpet, howls and whispers, releasing one LP in 1980 (recently reissued on CD by Pataphysique).

After a brief immersion in New York's Lower East Side loft scene, Toni returned to Tokyo. His desire for spontaneous freeform rock 'n' roll found release through an ever proliferating number of groups and collaborations, among them his Suicide tribute outfit,

Tokyo Suicide, and his most extreme non-musical project, Sweet Inspirations.

Recalling the absurdity of the latter project, Toni gasps, "I had to play a chord, then put my finger on the correct fret for the bassist, then hit the drums and cymbals with my guitar neck... boom, chik, boom. We didn't play many concerts because we could never play a song twice. We never rehearsed." Reiko, meanwhile, was now doing solo performances, her vocals occasionally augmented by the utterances of the newborn son who was strapped to her back (as can be heard on her solo CD *Fire Inside My Hat*).

Meanwhile, after a brief stint playing acid-drenched folk alongside Che Muka in Che-ShiZU (now on PSFL), Toni entered a heavy political phase. He toured Japan playing traditional folk music for Japanese minorities like Hokkaido's Ainu people. He also fell in with Kenichi Takeda's A-Musik, a collective modelled on Chris Cutler's Rock In Opposition initiative (and not to be confused with the Cologne label of the same name).

However, A-Musik's political stance went way beyond a commitment to free improvisation. Toni reveals, "We had been supporting this political group called the Eastern Asia Anti-Japanese Armed Front. Then they made an attempt on the Japanese Emperor's life. Most of them are in jail now."

"They exploded a train carrying the Emperor, but they missed him," Reiko continues. "They all got arrested. Toni was a supporter, but he was not directly involved in the attempt. He didn't make bombs or that kind of thing. But A-Musik and associated musicians were investigated."

Eventually Toni became disillusioned with political activities and gave up on his dream of "dissolving all national boundaries" after experiencing a religious conversion. "I began to read the Bible," he says, "and it said that when God's kingdom comes all borders will be destroyed. So I knew I could stop fighting."

DAVID KEENAN *Return Visit To Rock Mass* is out now on Orp

Maher Shalal Hash Baz

Idiot's avant

"I like non-musically music," grins Toni Kudo. "All of our drummers were passers-by. Before we played live, I would go into the street, stop the first person I saw and ask them to play the drums." Alongside his wife Reiko, Toni has been responsible for some of the strangest, all-out primitive musical sorcery to emerge from Japan. From their early duo performances as Noise in the late 70s, to Toni's current idiot-avant ensemble, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, they've maintained a constant presence on the Tokyo underground.

Surveying the West from eye miles high, Maher Shalal Hash Baz are born out of a biblical epiphany. Close in atmosphere to Allen Ginsberg's harmonium lullabies, Toni and Reiko's music is variously intense, exhilarating and beautifully spooky, citing in sources as diverse as Syd Barrett, Roland Kirk, The Godz and The Shaggs.



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fast tracks

Quick fire interviews with musicians in the news



Negativland

A recent announcement on the Net read, "The career of recording artists Negativland may be over", because your pressing plant held up

manufacturing your new CD, as a consequence of new guidelines on sample clearance which encourage US pressing plants to police new releases for uncleared samples. Isn't this statement a little overdramatic? Don Joyce: Not our words. We do suggest that if pressing plants continue to follow the gross view that any work with any unauthorized samples in it just gets dumped to avoid any possible problems, we may still find it difficult to press our work.

How does the 1976 US Copyright Act define 'Fair Use' of a sample?

'Fair Use' was a concept originally appearing in the US Constitution where our founding fathers first provided for the establishment of US copyright protections. Copyright is declared to be a 'limited right', and may be entirely set aside if the 'infringer' is making use of the protected work for parody, commentary, criticism, or other educational use. These uses are specifically defined as 'Fair Use' and do not necessarily require permission, clearance rights, or fees to the owner of any kind. The wisdom is simple: how many parodies or exposures would ever get made if permission from the subject of the criticism was required first? Culture would become lame, toothless.

Now that collage has entered mass marketed music, we suddenly have music 'owners' trying to prevent all this 'stealing' from happening unless they get to approve the use and get paid for the usage. We claim our collages to be Fair Use, both because we would not be granted permission to do this critical stuff, and it would be impossible to create this kind of work when we're using hundreds of fragments for which we would need to somehow locate and pay each and every owner, if they all approved of our use in the first place. Any form of elaborate collage becomes impossible in that kind of climate.

It's always easy to spot which is which, bootleg or creative re-use, but this is a clear distinction now missing from the laws. The US Constitution states that the reason for copyright laws is "to promote the creation of new work." That's what we want too. All kinds. Free of charge and free of charges.

How long do you think this kind of legislation can hold out against the plethora of sampling devices and home-taping formats?

We hope for legislative change, for changes in legal

interpretations, and most of all for a public acceptance of the cultural usefulness of collage. I think we're better at lobbying the music consumer than lobbyists in Washington, so that's what we do. We are trying to make our point by example.

Where do you go from here, and will your next album be coming out soon?

We finally did get the offending record pressed and it's

now out. We pressed it at a new place that either wasn't paying attention or didn't care. But who knows, if the RIAA [Recording Industry Association of America] continues the intimidation campaign in such a gross and undifferentiated way, by the time we return to this presser he may have become paranoid too. We'll see. Interview Rob Young. For further developments, see Negativland's Website: www.negativland.com

DAF

Plute have just released DAF's re-Techno trilogy from the early 80s. Why now? Is it your silver jubilee?

Gaby Delgado Lopez: [Mute boss] Daniel Miller was always interested in the DAF catalogue. Mute's first LP was our *Die Kleinen Und Die Grossen*. When the rights came available for the Virgin albums, Mute bought them.

In 1981-82, they were the ultimate machine sex music. Do they stand up, post-Techno?

DAF were like the godfathers of Techno and EBM [Electronic Body Music]. For a lot of people DAF is part of their history. Robert [Gott, drummer/composer] and I have done other things since DAF. *Germania* lasted 18 months, then *Wahns! Party over*. How did it feel the morning after?

Oh, it wasn't that exhausting! I travelled a lot, released a solo album [Hysteresis], and in 1985 met Robert again to make *First Step To Heaven*, a sort of disco DAF album.

So much for resolve. When you split, didn't you urge more groups to quit gracefully?

No. Sometimes you have to disappoint your listeners. I also do DJing, and it really drains you to watch the same people on the dancefloor for two hours, so you deliberately play a record they won't like. Old crowd goes, new crowd comes in. The same goes for music. People ask, "Why don't you get 'Der Mussolini' remixed?" I turn down offers to remix at least once a month. That way is nostalgia, so we gave them DAF as disco brothers instead.

It wasn't because you missed DAF's success?

No. More important than the fame is the money. On a major we sold a lot. I only need to sell 20 per cent as much on my own to make the same.

Why the continuing fascination with "Der Mussolini" [on *After the Gut*]?

It's the fascination of fascism. The song is still powerful because it still raises that taboo. But the German situation now is different than 1980.

Better or worse?

Different. In 1980 there was no big night wing movement in Germany. I now live in East Berlin, where there is potential for night wing ideas to take hold. I'm not sure I would write that song the same way now.

How do DAF's LPs sound to you now?

Any new record sounds better because the technology is better. DAF records sound more powerful in people's memories than reality. In their time, they were really powerful. Surely the power of music is about more than quality sound?

Of course. In terms of composition and lyrics, DAF were unique. DAF was very free music. DAF music doesn't care about song structures, harmonies, instrumentation, nothing. DAF is how it comes out of the machine.

Did a DAF song ever use more than 20 words?

No. It was necessary to use as few words as possible. Why waste the time? You can't play around much in German, because it is very precise. So why not use its best features? Make it as short, precise and imperative as you can, with as many consonants as and as few syllables as possible.

What is DAF DOS?

DAF reinterpreted in Berlin Techno style as a one off CD by me and my new partner, Wotan.

How did Robert Gott feel about it?

He didn't like it much. Thus DAF DOS, not from the Spanish, but from MS-DOS. DAF DOS is a new system for an old program. Interview Chris Blair. DAF's back catalogue is reissued on Mute.



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Puglia

When Jason and the Argonauts approached Crete, their entry to the port was blocked by Talos, a man of bronze, hurling huge rocks down on them from the cliffs. The last of his bronze race, Talos had been appointed by Zeus to guard the entrance of Europe. But he had an Achilles heel — a common complaint in the world of Greek myth, it seems — which the sorceress Medea exploited. Unwinded by her incantations, he struck his ankle — his only vulnerable point — against a stone and bled to death. These events are depicted on the monumental and very beautiful Talos vase in the Jatta Museum in Ruvo di Puglia. The vase's artwork was executed by the "Talos Painter" working in Athens in the last quarter of the fifth century BC. Such riches found their way to Roman Italy, and the museum is packed almost randomly with remnants of the treasure trove from the ancient necropolis of Ruvo, discovered in the last century.

Perhaps Talos passed down his Achilles heel to the music festival named after him. The region of Puglia, appropriately, is the heel of Southern Italy — the town of Ruvo is in the Achilles tendon belt, to be precise. It's off the usual tourist route, and I didn't see any English all the time I was there. A prosperous region of southern Italy, Puglia is the centre of olive oil production —

Evan Parker

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

indeed, I'm told, in the first year of the festival musicians were paid in kind, and this year Evan Parker could be observed with a large quantity of extra virgin, secured in his hand luggage on the return journey.

To call Talos a jazz festival doesn't do justice to either the Italian conception of the music or the stylistic range on display. Its organiser is leading jazz trumpeter and composer Pino Minniti, who is a Pugliese himself. The format was divided between solo concerts in the Sala Polivalente and more genre-crossing open air events later in the evening in the Piazza Cattedrale. Solo saxophone was the theme for the Sala, with Steve Lacy's concert a highlight, his huge tone on soprano dominating the intimate setting. You'd get an idea of his programme from the fine recent album *Live At Unity Temple* (reviewed in *The Wire* 175). "Little Roobe Toote" had real multiphonics for the brain whizzer, which Monk could only hint at on piano. Lacy's original compositions have a haiku-like density and compression, and "The Cruz" was drolly humorous. It's many years since he has visited Britain — "The phone call never comes," he said afterwards. Any promoters reading this, please note.

Evan Parker's circular breathing tour de force on soprano was equally breathtaking, if you'll excuse the pun. He says he doesn't decide which saxophone to take until leaving the house, though I can see that a tenor as hand luggage could be a problem. The venue's excellent acoustic gave a unique insight into the saxophonist's approach: intensity and dynamics rise and fall hypnotically, the tempo increasing until individual notes barely register. The kind of music that takes you over and immerses you in its waves of sound.

We know about Evan, of course. Less known will be multi-instrumentalist Eugenio Colombo, member of the celebrated Instabile Orchestra. His solo set exploited some exotic devices, including pegbox scales and slap tonguing — indeed, he performed Monk's "Ask Me Now" on panharmonica. But French saxophonist Louis Scialoja's performance confirmed my earlier feelings — all technique and not much music. The same applied to his band's performance later that evening of Les Violences De Remouet, their ECM album from last year.

Italian jazz has always had a special lyricism and cohesiveness, but in recent years there's been a more self-conscious exploration of folk roots. Reeds player

Gianluigi Trovesi — who appeared recently at the Bath Festival, a rare British visit for an Italian jazz musician — is a leading exponent of this tendency. His trio featured self-confessed folk artists Riccardo Tesi on organetto — a kind of accordion — and Patrick Vallant on virtuosic mandolin, a new one to me. If Trovesi often made reference to the forms of Early Music, the folk borrowings of Pino Minniti's own ensemble were both more diverse and indirect, his explorations ranging from South American tango to North African music. Minniti is the genius behind the postmodern masterwork *Suabro*, and updated compositions from this 1995 album were featured in his Sud Ensemble's concert in the Piazza Cattedrale.

Pierre Favre's Singing Drums trio were strong on polyrhythmic interplay and awkward time signatures. But unfortunately the weather intervened for the first time in the history of the festival — that, I guess, was its Achilles heel. Rain fell dramatically on the Antonello Salas/Sandro Setta duo, interrupting their lyrical, freeheeling explorations on piano/accordion and alto sax. On piano, Salas proved to be an extraordinary post-Cecil Taylor stylist.

But perhaps the most ambitious exploration of folk roots has been the Banda project, which recently resulted in the remarkable *La Banda* album (Enja), dedicated this year to the Castel Del Muro, symbol of the presence of Frederick II of Sicily in the region. In southern Italy the banda, or wind band, popularised opera among the rural poor — it's said Verdi became a national hero on the back of banda performances round the Italian regions. Here, they collaborated with local jazz musicians, but the banda also had its own "dirty" sound, like the early New Orleans ensembles, when performing folk arrangements.

The festival, amazingly, is free. The indoor recitals appealed more to the cognoscenti, but the large open-air audience weren't always up for attentive listening, as Pino Minniti's appeals showed. But I couldn't help thinking that, with music as 'free' as this in the other sense of the word, UK audiences would have been smaller and dwindled faster, even though it was costing them nothing. Music seems to be in the Italian air.

Strongman Talos may have fallen to the sorcery of Medea, but the festival named after him goes from strength to strength. **ANDY HAMPTON**

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Tied & Tickled trio live at Duisberg
Mono Club, Germany, summer 1998

kinetic kollektive



Is Weilheim the new Seattle? **Tied & Tickled Trio**, **Notwist** and **Village Of Savoonga** are just three of the endlessly proliferating groups who have put this sleepy German town on the post-rock map. Words: David Keenan. Photography: Philip Lethé

"People say that it seems to be always autumn in Weilheim," sniffs Andreas Gerth, keyboards and electronics operator in Tied & Tickled Trio. "It's true that all the music coming from here seems touched by a certain melancholia." A small, rural town south of Munich, Weilheim is currently churning out the most forward-looking music to come out of Germany since Düsseldorf and Cologne first rang with industrial klänge. It might have a melancholy bent, but the music is as exotically varied as the groups' names. There's the electronic drugg of Tied & Tickled Trio, the synth-skewed stoner rock of Notwist and the sample-seeded studio abstracts of Village Of Savoigna, to name the town's three most prominent starters. Based round the Payola, Kollaps and Hausmusik labels, its output would be impressive for a city many times its size, and it is all the more astonishing when closer inspection reveals all those groups and names are drawn from the same small cooperative of artists.

Caspar Brandner, drummer in Tied & Tickled/Savoigna/Potawatomi, is fully aware how confusing it can all become. "The incest in our scene sometimes seems a little bit ridiculous to other people," he sympathises, "but it gives us the advantage of being able to extract elements from different musical experiments and putting them together in a new, well-fitting configuration. Also, the fact that we know each other so well musically [means] there isn't much need for explanation or discussion and we can work quickly and effectively."

What's happening here mirrors similar giant steps being taken in backwaters the world over. Weaned on the US hardcore explosion of the mid- to late 80s, young musicians began to dig deeper underground as their appetite for some new kind of kick grew. Free jazz, Electronics, musique concrete and outsider folk have all been exhumed and welded to the roaring exoskeleton of full-on hardcore. OK, so in that sense, it's post-rock of a kind, but this time minus all the generic connotations of timidity, turgid, plodding fusion and anti-AC/DC rhetoric that generally characterises this territory, where sensible shoes must be worn at all times. With the Weilheimers, it's more about isolating some truly dense strains from the rock experience and using them to bolster the original pro-rock intent, as if they were trying to reanimate the corpse.

As a member of Notwist, Tied & Tickled Trio and Village Of Savoigna, drummer Markus Achter is perhaps the scene's key player. Since forming avant rock stoners Notwist with his brother Micha and Martin Messerschmidt, he has watched the Weilheim scene blossom at an alarming rate. "The community of musicians and bands developed over the years and I think it stems from the rural situation we live in," he explains. "I mean, there's not much to do here so we started making music, putting on concerts publishing fanzines and comics. Gradually we created our own economic situation, where one person distributes the records, one records them, one makes the covers, one prints the covers... so nearly everybody is more or less involved in all of the activities."

The Notwist are still an active component in the whole Weilheim buzz they ignited some 11 years ago. Superficially more straightforward than many of their mutant offspring, they've reconfigured rock's guitar/bass/drums trio components across three LPs in ways and combinations that appear mathematically impossible on paper. Previously drawing on lots of stoner rock staples such as Codense and Dinosaur Jr., their new album *Shonk* (on Sternolab's Duophonic label) submerges these tendencies in sticky layers of jazz light and processed synth. Martin Grutschmann — Village Of Savoigna's sampler player, also known for his icy solo Electronics as Conside — joins them for the first time, and their attack is now even more subtle and unpredictable.

Markus Achter agrees that Notwist are the most immediately graspable of a truly eccentric mob of musicians. "It's true that Notwist always works with songs," he confirms. "We arrange them and then sometimes try to work against the songs, but we always have a song structure as a starting point. Then we use the instruments, pile on electronics, improvise round them and allow accidents to shape the song. Perhaps we're a pop band that doesn't want to be one."



With Tied & Tickled Trio, the Achter brothers leapt headfirst into the bloop of early electronics while simultaneously setting the controls for the header regions of stellar jazz. They had already begun to explore such territories with earlier projects like the now defunct Potawatomi. Markus remembers their early assays fondly. "That was a collaboration with a free improvising bass clarinet player called Rud Mahal, where we attempted to combine free jazz, noise and post-hardcore elements. It was a predecessor and the counterpart to Tied & Tickled in that it combined improvisation and free elements with static structures to create tension, but it worked with other musical styles/methods, it was more intense and it always went to the extremes."

Andreas Gerth was playing in the comparatively straight-rocking Oqonok at the time. He originally designed the sleeves for Potawatomi, using photographs of the beautiful electronic instruments he constructed from scrap. The Achter brothers' interest was aroused and they asked him on board for their latest venture, which they christened Tied & Tickled Trio. After hooking up with local big cheese, saxophonist/pianist Johannes Enders, an old schoolfriend who'd played alongside the likes of Sam Rivers and Donald Byrd, the line-up was complete. Markus recalls, "When we started, Tied & Tickled was more or less only rhythm with electronics and bass, which worked live but when we recorded it, it was too boring and basically unsatisfying. So we asked Johannes to write and play for the recordings."

Enders's beautifully belched tone comes straight out of the belly of Blue Note, taking cues from the likes of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and the convoluted wibe patterns of Bobby Hutcherson. The resultant pile-up of humming electronic static and propulsive rhythmic hammering that characterises their self-titled debut (originally on Payola, now reissued by Bango) kicks like Big Fun-era Miles or Herbie Hancock's *Sextant*, albeit without some of those illustrious forebears' sidewalk sass and sleaze. A live favourite is their heavily nailed take on Joe Henderson's "Earth", from the *Elements* album he recorded with Alice Coltrane. "For us those Joe Henderson records of the '70s are very strange and inspiring," he raves. "We also like some of the Alice Coltrane collaborations with Pharoah Sanders."

But Markus is wary of electronic jazz's negative connotations. "We really wanted to find a way to integrate all this stuff into our music but without it becoming this typical groovy electronics meet jazz thing. Johannes's playing keeps us out of that whole Acid Jazz thing."

"I think it's also because we don't live in a big city," Andreas Gerth adds. "We aren't so surrounded by all this anonymous, cold, functional technology. We just use electronics on our records as another instrument to create sound that corresponds with our conception of music and that reflects where we come from."

Gerth's homemade instruments—which project electronic silhouettes onto the music, recalling the spooked soundtracks of *Chrome* and *The Residents*—are central to Tied & Ticked's deeply human aura and warmth. They look as fabulous as they sound: lost steam engine entrails and primitive pumps, a quaint futurama. "As a sculptor I have a pretty naive relation to technical considerations," he admits. "I tend to judge my creations purely by their appearance. As a musician, though, it helps if they actually work. I use something called a DTD6, which is a construction of metal pieces that not only look interesting, they also sound in a way I like. I simply contact-mic it and put it through an amp."

The Acher brothers also instigated Village Of Savoonga, whose sampler-heavy modern electronics are much more abstract. Their extended forays into hazy limbo territory have produced three starting, extraterrestrial long players. Village Of Savoonga, Philipp Schatz and Score Again, it's the constant line-up shuffling that keeps Markus inspired. "Working with different people gets you to different results," he says. "It was always important for us to try different things in different constellations to get new ideas. Our concept for Village Of Savoonga was simply to have no concept. We always go from one idea, or one noise, anything that comes into our minds." Building tracks from a single sound source or a solitary piano chink, textures are layered and warped in the studio.

"The origin of most of the songs is in the studio," Markus explains. "We're never really sure how the tunes will sound until we finish mixing them. Sometimes we only have a sketchy rhythmic idea or a bass pattern, though we also play fully composed pieces. When we play live, we open out spaces in the songs for intense improvisation, making them simpler and more malleable."

At the heart of Savoonga's studio-bound process is the Upton recording plant run by resident Hausmusik engineer Mario Thaler—"The Mastermind," as Markus describes him. Indeed, like legendary Krautrock engineers Dieter Dierks and Conny Plank before him, Thaler works according to his own uniquely awry sound logic. Markus, however, doesn't see his music conforming to a particularly Krautrock aesthetic. "Sure, I'm a big fan of Jaki Liebenow's drumming, and for me it was certainly a big influence, alongside the aspects of repetition in some of Faust's music and the electronic sounds of early Cluster. But I really don't feel that that has anything to do with the fact that we're a German band. I was too young to recognise Krautrock when it happened, so I didn't grow up with any particular musical tradition. All German music was as near or far as any other music from elsewhere. For me that only changed with the musical scene which we built up around ourselves."

Markus is quicker to place the activities of Savoonga et al in the same context as contemporaries like Mouse On Mars. "Some of the new German electronic music is really important and inspiring to us, especially the A-Musik scene from Cologne," he enthuses. "To see Mouse On Mars playing out live, as a band, was a very big influence and one of our most fascinating concert experiences ever."

Savoonga are undoubtedly the most farflung of the Weihen collective. But their kind of hybrid is becoming more and more common as the leftfield opens out to the abuse of previously straight-edged punkers. For Markus, the explosion of new electronic exploration and sampling culture has blown open many a closed mind. "There's definitely a greater interest and understanding of strange, innovative music these days, which makes it much easier to get our music across. It sometimes seems that almost everyone knows the likes of Pierre Henry, Lee Perry or Ornette Coleman. People don't panic anymore when they see a saxophone on stage." Andreas Gerth is also an advocate of cultural cross-pollination. "I think the borders between the underground and so-called 'high-culture' are much more permeable than they were a few years ago. New ideas and developments spread much faster than before, what was one day a unique expression of a special scene is by the next day public knowledge." ... Tied & Ticked Trio is out now on Bingo, Nowak's Shrink is on Dugophon.



Tied & Ticked Trio's Michael Acher and Christian Schmitz (top), bass clarinetist Stefan Schreiber



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THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

the primer

An occasional series in which we offer a beginner's guide to the must-have recordings of some of our favourite musicians. This month, Peter Shapiro gets on the good foot with **James Brown** Illustration: Savage Pencil

Call it the Muhammed Ali principle. If you talk up your own game as much as the Godfather of Soul, you've got to be one bad motherlucker listening to (and watching) "the man with the crown", James Brown, walk it like he talks it with every grunt, glide, stride and shimmy is the main pleasure of JB's music. Just like watching big screen badasses like Bruce Lee, Richard Roundtree, Tamara Dobson or even Charles Bronson putting foot to butt and dispensing lead, there's a vicarious thrill in watching Mr Dynamite camel-walk across a stage up to the mic to deliver one of his trademark grunts with precision timing. With Brown, the briefest gesture — a grunt, a shake of the head, an off-the-cuff vamp — meant everything. No one, not even Phil Spector or Trevor Horn, packed so much — timbre, forward motion, sparkle, intensity — into each bar. Even when Brown started to economise in the '70s, he always understood what made pop music great in the first place: an immediacy and momentum that steamrollered all obstacles. Brown is at once the most superficial musician in history and the most profound: there is nothing below the surface of any of his performances, yet his links to an ancient tradition that has its roots in the community musics of West and Central Africa are glaringly obvious. Moreover, Brown was the most assertively black personality ever to be accorded mainstream acceptance in America. His esteem in both the African-American and white communities was such that he was courted by politicians such as Vice President Hubert Humphrey for his "Don't Be A Dropout" campaign. On the day Martin Luther King was assassinated, television stations in cities with large black populations aired a live JB concert in the hope that it would prevent rioting, it worked! As with Louis Armstrong and Jimmy Rodgers, it would be impossible to overstate his importance or overestimate his stature.

Unlike most legendary musical figures, however, Brown's musical legacy has actually been treated with the respect it deserves. And it's a huge legacy. Not including side projects, he has at least 85 albums to his credit — not bad for a singles artist. For years Brown's best records languished in PolyGram's vaults, while disposable items such as *Sex Machine Today* (a 1975 attempt to recapture past glories) remained in circulation. Then the label placed Brown's catalogue in the hands of scholars and former associates like Cliff White, Harvey Winder and Alan Leeds. They have subsequently produced a series of revelatory reissues

that are landmarks of curatorial diligence and corporate largesse.

Live At The Apollo (Polydor 843479 CD)

James Brown was born in a shack on the outskirts of Barnwell, South Carolina on 3 May 1933. Denying for pennies as a sideline to picking cotton in his adopted hometown of Augusta, Georgia, he was arrested for breaking into a car to steal a coat when he was 15 years old. Paroled in 1952, he joined lifelong sidekick Bobby Byrd's Gospel Starlighters (the group also played

secular gigs, for which it was renamed The Avons.) Unable to afford horns, Byrd and Brown would whistle during their Wynonie Harris and Joe Turner imitations. The group changed its name to The Flames and stepped into Little Richard's shoes when he got too big to play local dates. Brown's irrepressible energy and acrobatics quickly garnered The Flames a following and caught the attention of a local radio station, for which they recorded "Please Please Please" in 1955. Signed to Syd Nathan's King/Federal label





Brown and The Jimates re-recorded the song for a single in February 1956. It eventually sold over a million copies. Before going on to rewrite the rules about the role of rhythm in Western music, Mr. Please Please laid waste to the standard notion of a ballad singer. Like that other funky megamelomaniac, George Clinton, Brown always wanted to be a crooner—in his fantasies he was a camel-walking cross between Louis Jordan and Billy Eckstine. But however desperately James desired to be as

urbane and smooth as Charles Brown, he always came out rasping like Ray Brown. Ray Charles may have introduced the sound of gospel into R&B, but Brown brought into popular music the speaking-in-tongues possession exhibited by such shouters as The Five Blind Boys Of Mississippi's Archie Brownlee and The Swan Silvertones' Claude Jeter.

After "Please Please Please" Brown released nine

duds in a row until he hit upon the equally prostrate supplication "Try Me" (1958), which firmly established him as Soul Brother No. 1. When Brown applied his scorched earth vocals to standards like "Bewildered" and "Prisoner Of Love" and still made the pop charts, smarmy love men like Johnny Mathis were sent running for cover. As monumental as Brown's ballads were, the greatest moment—both artistically and historically, of his early career was *Live At The Apollo*. Convinced that his fans would want a document of his electric live show, Brown approached Syd Nathan to record some dates at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. Nathan refused, so Brown went ahead, even paying for the recording himself. Shelled until May 1963, *Live At The Apollo* eventually hit number two on the American album charts. It is undoubtedly one of the most brilliant performances of Brown's incandescent career. *Live At The Apollo* is pure physicality transposed to vinyl: flash, convulsing motion, bravado, urgency. Despite the crowd noise, Brown is so absorbed in the magnificence of his performance, hearing it now is like spying on someone dancing in front of a bedroom mirror. The only problem with listening to *Live At The Apollo*, or any of his live albums, is how the crowd screaming alerts you to what you missed by not being there. Brown doing the mashed potato or good-footing it across the stage or throwing his cape off to come back to the mic one last time. Not only was *Live At The Apollo* a commercial and artistic triumph, but as a result of Brown's own financing and business acumen, the album, along with Ray Charles's growing independence, became a high profile symbol of the visibility of African-American self-sufficiency.

Foundations Of Funk — A Brand New Bag: 1964-1969

(Polydor 531 165 2xCD)

Beginning with *Live At The Apollo*, Brown embarked on an unparalleled period of world-changing activity that lasted until "Funky President (People It's Bad)" ended its R&B chart run at the end of 1974. During those 11 years, Brown singlehandedly (with some help from his group) orchestrated a tectonic shift in the foundation of music. In a manner not dissimilar from the compositional methods of Charles Mingus or Duke Ellington, Brown would sing and hum the song parts to bandleaders Nat Jones and Pee Wee Ellis, who would then transcribe them for the other musicians. Estranged from King over the *Live At The Apollo* affair, Brown adopted a holding pattern for the latter half of 1963 and the beginning of 1964, recording versions of "Candida" and "Things That I Used To Do" for Mercury subsidiary Smash. Then, in May, with newcomers such as saxophonists Maceo Parker and Nat Jones on board, Brown and his group recorded "Out Of Sight", which found a glorious middle ground between his screaming cover of The Five Royales's "Think" and "Prisoner Of Love." With one ear tuned to the latest street slang and

the other to Jesse Hill's 1960 proto-funk classic "Ooh Poo Pah Doo". Brown crafted a sinuous and sneaky groove that was as lusty and lithe as his own dancing. "Out Of Sight" was light years away from the mainstream of black American music, as defined by Sam Cooke and Motown, but nothing could have prepared the world for "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" For all of the "naturalism" that racists and Cartesians like to ascribe to Brown, the bone-rattling effect of "Papa" was largely due to the fact that the master tape was speeded up during post-production to give the record a claustrophobic feel. As a consequence, the blaring horns, piercing guitar and roiling rhythm section sound that much more intense. On "Papa" Brown reduces the entire gospel vocal tradition to falsetto shrieks and guttural roars. But more than just glare and flamboyance, it is also innovative: the 'chank' of the guitar part might well be the genesis of reggae. More significantly, the record upgraded the once anonymous instrumental bottom end to the be-al and end-all of music.

He followed "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" with the equally marvelous "I Got You (I Feel Good)", "Money Won't Change You" and "Let Yourself Go". The call-and-response interplay between guitarists Jimmy Nolen and Alphonso "Country" Kellum and the horn section on 1967's "Let Yourself Go" marks the moment when the guitar began to supplant the horns as the main instrumental focus in Brown's music. Nolen and Kellum were brought even further up front on the two records that triggered the shift away from soul towards funk — "Cold Sweat" and "There Was A Time". With the exception of the incomparably raucous *Dyke & The Blazers*, nothing else at the time sounded quite like "Cold Sweat". On the record, Brown uses his voice like he uses his group — as a percussion instrument. The track features the catchiest horn hook ever, and during the "give the drummer some" interlude, you can hear drummer Clyde Stubblefield and bassist Bernard Odum inventing the next 30 years of music.

All of the above and a lot more are included on *Foundations Of Funk*, possibly the finest moment of PolyGram's rescue programme. In addition to complete versions of "The Popcorn", "I Got The Feelin'", "You Got To Have A Mother For Me" and "Brother Rapp", this double CD contains "Ain't It Funky Now", "Say It Loud — I'm Black And I'm Proud", "Funky Drummer" and a killer live version of "Out Of Sight/Bring It Up (Holler's Avenue)" for which James Brown at Home With His Bad Self! The album was eventually released with the title *Sex Machine*. Much of it was indeed legitimate live material recorded with Brown's 1969 group in Georgia, but it's The JB's material, overdubbed with audience noise, that steals the show. The new version of "Sex Machine" is just as good as the single. "Bewilderer" even surpasses the original version, and letting Bootsy loose on the "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" groove is a bit like

against the concept of "progression". 1969's "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" and "Ain't It Funky" are nothing more than rams on single horn licks, with Brown grunting the respective title phrases a few times.

With the exception of Bobby Byrd and drummers Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield, Brown's entire group walked out in March 1970 over a pay dispute. They were replaced by a band of Cincinnati teenagers called The Pacesettters, who used to hang around the King Studios. Now renamed The JB's, the group's core members were two brothers, bassist William "Bootsy" and guitarist Phil "Catfish" Collins. Quickly recognising the Collins brothers as gifted rhythm players, Brown forever banished the horns to the background of his music. The first record cut with the new group was "Get Up! I Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine" which ranks



alongside "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" and "Cold Sweat" as one of JB's most influential releases. Only two things matter about the record: Bootsy's bass, which has more popping, slithering, sliding, strutting gangster lean than a hustler's conversation on Lennox Avenue, and Catfish's tersely angular chicken scratch guitar. With Jabo Starks's minimal drum part for company, the tension built up by the liquid bass and rawboned guitar is staggering. After recording the nearly as good "Super Bad", The JB's re-recorded "Sex Machine" and simulated a medley of "Bewilderer/Got The Feelin'/Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" for a live double album that was originally going to be titled *James Brown At Home With His Bad Self!* The album was eventually released with the title *Sex Machine*. Much of it was indeed legitimate live material recorded with Brown's 1969 group in Georgia, but it's The JB's material, overdubbed with audience noise, that steals the show. The new version of "Sex Machine" is just as good as the single. "Bewilderer" even surpasses the original version, and letting Bootsy loose on the "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" groove is a bit like

petting Dennis Skinner or Christopher Hitchens against a Young Conservative in a televised debate.

Hot Pants

(Polydor 517984 CDLP)

Brown left King after *Sex Machine*. Hot Pants was his first album for Polydor, and it is also his finest funk-era album; it is principally by default. For one thing, it's not a double and it only has four tracks. In addition, as the first album recorded after Bootsy and Catfish left to form their own group, The House Gods, Hot Pants is the greatest testament to JB's powers of regeneration through the vamps, which inaugurated his reign as the "Minister of the new, new heavy funk". As minimal in their way as anything by Steve Reich, "Blues & Pans", "Can't Stand It", "Escape-ism" and "Hot Pants (She's Got) Use What She's Got To Get What She Wants)" relish the fact that they get no where fast — they hit their groove from the get-go and stay there for an average of seven and a half minutes. Without Bootsy's virtuosic, if somewhat dominating, basslines, the tracks on Hot Pants were anchored around Heiron "Cheese Man's" droning, yet fearsome guitar comps-cum-solo runs, and bassist Fred Thomas's rudimentary pulses. Hot Pants is groove as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary ("a monotonous routine, a rut"), almost completely stripped of its metaphorical connotations. An American Top 25 hit, "Escape-ism" is apparently the vamp the group played to kill time while they waited for Bobby Byrd to show up for the recording session of "I Know You Got Soul" (the recent CD reissue includes the complete 19 minute take with Soul Brother No. 1 mumbering and stumbling his way through Little Willie John and Jimmy McGuff references). "Hot Pants" itself is basically Fela Kuti's career in nine minutes (minus the three conga players) mesmerising, hypnotic, interlocking polyrhythms, naive politics, and a less than salubrious view of women. Despite the notoriety and enormous commercial success of "Escape-ism" and "Hot Pants", "Can't Stand It" is the track that ushered in the era of the "new, new heavy funk". A remake of Brown's 1967 single "I Can't Stand Myself (When You Touch Me)", it marks the complete transition of the chicken scratch guitar riff from an integral part of the rhythm section to the music's lead element. Catfish's chicken scratch licks had a bell-like tone to them — they still sounded like they were played by an instrument capable of producing harmony and melody — but Cheese's riffs are so intense that they sound like they've got no tone at all, so the strings reverberating without resonating.

This guitar sound survived as Brown's signature until the dawn of disco. Despite Jabo Starks's incomparable rhythm patterns and Fred Thomas's increasingly fluid basslines, singles such as 1972's "There It Is" and The JB's "Do It To Death" and, of course like 1973's *The Paycock* and 1974's *Hell*, hang almost entirely on the choked riffs of Cheese and Jimmy Nolen. *The Paycock*, in particular, explores the deepest reaches of manic wah-wah funk, with Tantric cuts that never resolve themselves

Sex Machine

(Polydor 517984 CD)

On the cusp of the 70s, as in anticipation of Prog rock's tyranny of complex time signatures and chord changes, Brown and his assorted barbarian priests burst through the gates of dawn and instigated an uprising

Brown's last significant single of the funk era was 1976's furious "Get Up Offa That Thing (Release The Pressure)", but by that point "The Original Disco Man" was eclipsed by a genre that took the concept of "Sex Machine" far more literally than the man who invented it.

The JB's

Food For Thought
(People 5601 LP)

"Ladies and gentlemen, there are seven acknowledged wonders of the world. You are about to witness the eighth!" — MC Danny Ray introducing The JB's

Brown is notorious for being a vicious taskmaster, but given the often ad-hoc nature of his group, he had to be. With drummers rubbing for sick bassists, trumpet players claiming to be sax players in order to land the gig, recording whenever and wherever it felt right, and

with occasionally less than a week to rehearse a new group before hitting the road, the Godfather had to instill his troops with a sense of discipline and fear worthy of the Cosa Nostra. With Brown laying down the law and trombonist Fred Wesley arranging various riffs into vamps, *Food For Thought*, The JB's' first album under their own name, is easily as good as — if not better than — any of Brown's own funk-era albums. Comprised of three different line-ups (one including such fusion luminaries as Randy Brecker, Joe Farrell and Bob Cranshaw) recorded over six different sessions, *Food For Thought* makes it on pure kinetics alone. "The Grunt", recorded when the Collins brothers and drummer Frank Waddy were still in the fold, was probably the rawest track associated with Brown since "Cold Sweat". It features one of Bootsy's most swinging basslines alongside the greatest maracas playing this side of Jerome Green; the boss's screams are replaced by a squealing sax that became the foundation of The

Bomb Squad's productions for Public Enemy; the other horns are pure Afro-beat call-and-response; and it sounds like it was recorded in the studio bathroom. "My Brother" (probably devised as a novel way to get around payola — it was dedicated to a disc jockey from Philadelphia) has a chicken scratch riff outdone only by Nile Rodgers and Reggie Lucas, while "Pass The Peas", one of the three greatest songs ever written about food (the other two are Willie Bobo's "Fried Neckbones And Some Home Fries" and Rakere's "Bacalao Con Pan"), is introduced by Bobby Roach and Bobby Byrd waxing nostalgic about Southern treats like Hoppin' John and chitterlings.

Food For Thought was swiftly followed by 1973's *Doin' It To Death*. Nearly as good as The JB's' debut, it picked up where *Hot Pants* left off, with both the title track and "More Peas" (featuring Cheese and Nole's most atonal guitars) clocking in at over 12 minutes. Brown's bizarre association with Richard Nixon reared

JB gets down with his bad self



the primer

its ugly head with the matter-of-fact priorities of "You Can Have Watergate, Just Gamme Some Bucks And I'll Be Straight", but their next album, credited to Fred Wesley And The JBs, chose its political allies more carefully. Released in 1974, the theme of *Damn Right I Am Somebody* was inspired by one of Jesse Jackson's catchphrases, while the music was undoubtedly inspired by the success of Herbie Hancock's *Headhunters* album. Brown's first excursion into the realm of synthesizers produced the landmark tracks "Same Beat" and "Blow Your Head", with Soul Brother No. 1 himself playing the Moog lines in a style that opened up street funk to the cosmic regions being explored by Hancock.

The JBs albums are only the most well-known and successful of umpteen side projects, most of which appeared on Brown's own People label. When Brown's group walked out in 1970, they all, with the exception of Fred Wesley, recorded *Doing Their Own Thing* as Maceo & All The King's Men for the House Of The Fox label. When he returned to the fold, Maceo recorded *Us!* with The JBs as Maceo & The Mados in 1974. The eponymous Bobby Byrd was repaid with some of Brown's best grooves: "I Know You Got Soul" and "You Got To Have A Job". Byrd's wife Vicki Anderson answered the Godfather's chauvinism with killer tracks like "Answer To Mother Popcorn (I Got A Mother For You)", "Super Good", "I'm Too Tough For Mr. Big Stuff" and "Message From The Soul Sisters". Meanwhile, Marva Whitney's 1969 album *It's My Thing* came up with the perfect retort to The Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing".

Rob Base & DJ EZ Rock

"It Takes Two"
(Profile 7186 12")

Public Enemy

"Rebel Without A Pause"

From *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*
(Def Jam 527358 CD/MC/LP)

The Original Disco Man made some fine records during the era of rhesonates and cocaine — "It's Too Funky In Here", "Body Heat", "The Spark" and "Jam" — but compared to Philly International, Salsoul, P-Funk and Chic, Brown was treading water. In the Bronx, however, he was still "the mighty man man with the master plan, the way cool boss with the real hot sauce", and all musical activity existed within his ambit. Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash might have relied on records by Dennis Coffey, The Incredible Bongo Band, Billy Square, Jimmy Carter and The Isley Brothers to rock the block parties where they made their names, but it's safe to say that Hip-hop wouldn't exist without the Godfather.

Brown more or less invented the breakfast with "Cold Sweat", while "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose", "Get On The Good Foot" and "Funky Drummer" were all B-boy anthems. Hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa paid tribute to Brother Raog's reconfiguration of rhythm by recording "Unity" with him in 1984. With a classic BOs street funk backing courtesy of The Sugarhill

Gang's Keith LeBlanc, Doug Wimbish and Skip McDonald, "Unity" was Brown's best record in ages, but his second coming would have to wait until Eric B & Rakim's 1986 single "I Know You Got Soul".

Based on Bobby Byrd's Brown-produced track of the same name, "I Know You Got Soul" helped usher in the era of sampling, as Stetsasonic put it, "To tell the truth, James Brown was old! Until Eric and Rak came out with 'I Know You Got Soul'." "I Know You Got Soul" was so influential that a virtual James Brown appeared on hundreds of records in the late 80s and early 90s, and according to legend, Brown hired someone to check new releases for uncleared samples. "I Know You Got Soul" is rather literal in its Brown quotations, but in 1988 two records appeared that heard his disembodied shrieks and chopped-up beats as the main elements in a chaotic urban soundscape. Cited as the greatest single of all time by *Spin* magazine in 1989, "It Takes Two" by Rob Base and DJ EZ Rock ranks as one of the most breath-takingly immediate records ever made by someone who was not James Brown. Of course, the part that grabs you by the seat of your pants is a loop of JB's trademark yelp and grunt that electrified "It Takes Two" with Brownian motion.

JB: the last pop star?



The loop (as well as the beat and the vocal hook) comes from Lyn Collins's 1972 single, "Think (About It)". Probably Brown's most important outside production, "Think" is his most sampled record after "Funky Drummer" and "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose".

Where Rob Base and DJ Rock had the technology to make Brown's energy positively bonic, Public Enemy and their producers, The Bomb Squad, turned Brown into white noise. Brown is all over PE's two classic albums, it takes *A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* and *Fear Of A Black Planet*, but he is torn to shreds, reversed, stunted and deconstructed. Aside from Chuck D's rap, Flavor Flav's interjections, a brief bridge and a synth bass, there is nothing on "Rebel Without A Pause" but a sample of "Funky Drummer" and a mindboggling saw loop from The JBs' "The Grunt". In the late 60s and early 70s Brown was the sound of Black Pride. In The Bomb Squad's hands, the sound of JBs saxophonist Robert McCulloch blowing his diaphragm out to produce an impossibly high-pitched scowl became emblematic of Hip-hop's menace and alienation. "The Grunt" also appears on "Night Of The Living Baseheads", which takes Brown's Tantic funk to a new extreme. Built around a one-second trombone sample, "Night Of The Living Baseheads" doesn't even permit the tiny phrase to resolve itself, cutting it off before it finishes and repeating it throughout the entire track, creating more tension than Bootsy and Catfish managed on "Sex Machine".

Star Time

(Polygram 649108 4x CD)

Brown's new status as the detonator of the Hip-hop bomb was the impetus for PolyGram's ambitious reissue programme. No major figure has been treated better by back catalogue reconfiguration than Brown and no box set has been more well-received than *Star Time*. Almost universally hailed as the greatest album of all time upon its release in 1991, *Star Time* threatens a consensus as stultifying as that surrounding *Sergeant Pepper*. Not only is it a near perfect selection of the man's known music, it also features revelations like the original take of "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag", so you can hear how it sounded before the tape was sped up, and the first appearance of material scheduled for the aborted *Love, Power, Peace* live triple album. *Star Time* is that rare anthology with only one dud track across four CDs; it makes an undeniable argument for the greatness of its subject. The one problem is, it undermines the absence of an equivalent iconic figure in contemporary music. Perhaps this is its ultimate legacy by reducing popular music to its barest essentials and creating the source material for the first genre totally reliant on technology. James Brown killed the pop star.



"The new music reaches back to the roots of what jazz was originally...there's so much room to take this sound and do something else with it - not better, but different." **ARCHIE SHEPP 1965**



Dewey Redman
The Ear Of The Beholder (IMP12712)
Dewey Redman, alto and tenor; Ted Daniel, trumpet; Jiro Robinson, cello; Leroy Jenkins, violin; Brown, bass; Eddie Moore, drums and Benny Johnson, percussion. Recorded June 7 & 8, 1972 and September 8 & 10, 1974. *Interconnection*, (mont, White-Bridge, PS Beauty, Sunlighting, Image (in Doge), Seeds and Seeds, Aile De Mure, Fuscylives, CDW. Tracks 8-11 taken from *Coltrane* (ASD1308).



Sam Rivers Trio
Live (IMP12582)
Sam Rivers, tenor, soprano, flute & piano; Cecil McBee, Arid Anderson & Lewis Warril, bass and Barry Altschul, drums. Recorded August 2 and November 10, 1971. *Notes of Milesian Parts 1-3, Suite for Molder - Part One and Part Two*. All selections reused unedited and in their entirety for the first time.



Alice Coltrane
A Monastic Tale (IMP12672)
Alice Coltrane, piano & harp; Pharoah Sanders, tenor saxophone, flute and bass clarinet; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Ron Riley & Pauland Ali, drums. Recorded January 29, June 4, 1968 and March 7, 1967. *Lord, Help Me To Go, The Sun, Doveskruft, Gospel Train, I Wish To See You, Lovely Day Boat, Oceanic Beloved, Atomic Power, Abeyance*. Tracks 1-2 originally issued on *Cosmic Music* (AS-3141) and track 3 previously unissued.



Pharoah Sanders
Dead Duck, Head
Summer, Balance (IMP12682)
Pharoah Sanders, soprano saxophone and wood flute; Woody Shaw, trumpet; Gary Bartz, alto saxophone; Lennie Hirsh Smith, piano, thumb piano & percussion; Cecil McBee, bass; Clifford Lewis, drums; Nathaniel Bettis and Anthony Wilson, percussion. Recorded July 1, 1970. *Summer, Balance Unplay and Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord*.



Archie Shepp
The Way Ahead (IMP12722)
Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Owens, trumpet; Gracian Maspar III, trombone; Walter Davis Jr and Dave Burrell, piano; Charles Davis, baritone saxophone; Ron Carter and Walter Booker, bass; Beaver Harris and Ray Haynes, drums. Recorded January 26, 1968 and February 26, 1969. *Dance If I Know (The Struggle, Frustration, Fight, Sophisticated Lady, New Africa, Bad*. Tracks 5-6 originally issued on *Kalulus* (AS-8262).



Marion Brown
Three For Shopp (IMP12693)
Marion Brown, alto saxophone; Gracian Maspar III, trombone; Dave Burrell & Stanley Cowell, piano; Morris James (Gloria), bass; Bobby Cepp & Beaver Harris, drums. Recorded December 1, 1966. *New Blue, Fortunate, The Shadow Knows, Spooks, West India, Delicate*.



The Cecil Taylor Unit/Powerful Rust Sextet
Mixed (IMP12702)
Tracks 1-3: Cecil Taylor, piano; Jimmy Lyons, alto saxophone; Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Ted Curson, trumpet; Kenneth Rudin, trombone; Henry Ginn, bass & Sunny Murray, drums. Recorded October 10, 1961. Tracks 4-7: Roswell Rudd, trombone; Robin Kenyatta, alto saxophone; Gungui Logan, flute, bass clarinet; Charlie Haden & Lewis Warril, basses and Beaver Harris, drums. Recorded July 4, 1965. *Bubb, Piss, Mood, Everywhere, Nubia No-How, Respect, Santa's Dance*.



Albert Ayler
Live in Greenwich Village The Complete Impulse Recordings (IMP2232)
Albert Ayler, tenor and alto saxophone; Don Ayler, trumpet; Joel Freedman, cello; Michel Sanguin, violin; Bill Fowell, Henry Ginn, Alan Silva & Lewis Warril, bass; Sunny Murray & Beaver Harris, drums; George Sells, trombone.

Disc 1 recorded March 28, 1965 and December 16, 1966. *Andy Ghost, Truth is Marching In, Our Prayer, Spirits Rejoice, Divine Pencosmosis, Angels*.

Disc 2 recorded February 26, 1967. *For John Coltrane, Change Me Come, Light in Darkness, Heavenly Hosts, Spontaneous Rebirth, Infinite Spirit, Gongs In The Alps, Universal Thoughts* (previously unissued).

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New York avantist **Alan Licht** loves art rock, free jazz and Metal excess. That's why Loren MazzaCane Connors, Rashied Ali and Jim O'Rourke are all dying to play with him. By AC Lee

"To me, post-rock means the abstraction of the feeling of punk or rock into a new, still emerging multimedia identity," declares New York guitarist Alan Licht, holding court in his Dream House, three stories above Canal Street in lower Manhattan. "It seems like the art world and music world are merging once again."

From the beginning, Licht's crusade has been to infuse high art with doses of low rock attitude and vice versa. Whether pursuing his mission as a solo musician, in groups such as Low Child, Run On and Rudolph Grey's Blue Humans, or in collaborations with artists ranging from DJ Spooky to Rashied Ali to Love's Arthur Lee, Licht anticipated and embodied a post-rock sensibility before it was ever a conscious movement. In his definition, the point is not to question rock's boundaries just for deconstruction's sake, but to celebrate its values via his constant redefining of its limits. He has articulated his position in his writings for magazines like *Holzza* and *Forced Exposure*, where he helped reintroduce the likes of La Monte Young to contemporary rock audiences.

Like numerous guitar rebels before him, Licht mines the interstices of orthodox technique. Ever on the prowl for new modes of expression, his playing incorporates Derek Bailey's clanging sonorities, Hendrix's endless static drone and sustain, and the panharmonic vistas of Sonic Youth. He also retains a firm command of the rapidfire, blues-based chops of the Page/Beck school, a tradition usually scorned by punk-inspired musicians and fans as excessive and contemptible. As a result, he actively cultivates a sensibility which evokes the technical grandstanding of guitarists like Lindsay Buckingham and Eddie Van Halen alongside vanguard iconoclasts such as Hans Reichel and Key Hano. "A guitar hero is a guitar hero," proclaims Licht evenly.

His solo CD, *The Evan Dando Of Noise?*, released this year on NZ to-fish-ose proselytizer Bruce Russell's Corpus Hermeticum label, constitutes his most fully realized statement to date, merging both his musical and critical pursuits. The music is a survey of everything he does well — overdriven shredders for electric guitar, spooked two-note organ etudes, and a duet with a tape loop of a contestant in a yodeling contest, which is as arresting for its musicality as its tongue-in-cheek hilarity. Meanwhile, he persuasively outlines his post-rock platform in the disc's extensive sleevenotes. Presented as an issue of *Lopogonnia*, a journal intermittently included in Hermecum releases, he simply regains his heady two-year correspondence with Russell. In face of the latter's narrow "one-eyed gossamer" of "free noise," Licht brilliantly champions the possibilities of song, while exposing the elated rhetoric of art versus pop as an empty pseudo-distinction, and so-called genre distinctions like noise, Minimalism and rock as mere semantic conventions. The whole thing is vintage Licht, defining a space where art nerds and headbangers alike align behind an aesthetic vision in which art occurs not in exclusive zones of activity, but along the same broad continuum.

The five CD barrage Licht released on the world in 1997, which included *The Evan Dando Of Noise?* and a set of duets with Loren MazzaCane Connors, illustrates how he slots his various modes into just such a continuum. This autumn he branches into an installation with his piece *Today I Am A Fountain Pen*, which roughly coincides with the release of *Halfmoon Estates*, a "big band" recording led by Licht and Connors, and produced and masterminded by Jim O'Rourke. On the back burner is his collection of essays and music criticism, to be published by Drag City.

"Growing up, I hated rock music," Alan Licht recalls. "When I was a little kid I remember seeing a poster of Peter Dinklage where he's shirtless, and I just remember thinking that was the most repulsive thing I'd ever seen, and that I didn't

want to ever have anything to do with it as long as I lived. I was like, six years old. I thought it was totally gross."

Licht spent his adolescence in New Jersey, USA, which was impossibly suburban and even a little creepy in its cultural haplessness. But he soon enough forsook the relatively conservative upbringing that had originally swayed him against the jumpin' profanity of rock. "It was Shawn Cassidy, of all things, that turned me around. Sent me on the path to rock 'n' roll heaven."

By the age of nine, Licht had picked up the guitar that set him on his precocious path of discovery, scouring nearby New York for records and magazines, for his rock data files to sustain him through his high school cover group phase. The ecstatic rumble of proto-hardcore groups like Husker Du and Bad Brains, and the new noises emanating from NYC, left Licht as enraptured by the aesthetic issues surrounding rock as the noise itself. "There was an article [music critic] Robert Palmer wrote in the *New York*



Times where he mentioned Sonic Youth, Live Skull and Green Branca being the new guitar shit, and then the *Toxus At!* Guitars cassette magazine came out, which was the first place I heard Rudolph Grey."

But hip New York noise couldn't entirely eradicate his suburban upbringing. He developed an interest in the Metal scene that dominated 80s pop music, whose latest licks and thrills were transcribed monthly in glossy musician mags. Ironically, he first encountered his early role model Henry Kaiser in *Guitar Player*. Following him over the next few years shaped the final stage in Licht's evolving style and sensibility. "I had come from playing lead guitar in classic rock cover bands, then Metal and jazz guitar lessons, so in a way I had heard everything that was going to influence my playing."

Kaiser introduced Licht to structural ideas he could apply beyond the guitar. "I was really into [Kaiser's] *It's A Wonderful Life*," he remembers, "which sounds like ten people playing at once, and he explained how it was inspired by Evan Parker and Terry Riley. At the same time I was getting into Philip Glass and Steve Reich, so I just started making all these different connections."

These connections naturally fed back into his love for rock and pop. "I realised pretty early on that, in [The Beatles'] 'She Loves You', the way the melody stays constant while the chords change behind it, was the same thing that interested me in Steve Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians*."

Licht was also consciously trying to avoid the common mistake made by putative avant gardists: "A lot of people discard what they heard originally," he argues. "When they get to Coltrane they go 'Oh! This is the real thing!' But for me, it didn't mean I didn't still listen to Neil Young."

A further concern was to avoid the academic vacuum and retain the urgency of rock. "A lot of the people associated with experimental electric guitar playing just didn't like good rock music," he laments. "That's what was so cool about meeting Rudolph Grey and [Bobbenburg guitarists] Donald Miller. Rudolph's favourite stuff in the world is The Music Machine and Love."

Licht had been a fan of Grey ever since high school. The enigmatic guitarist (and author of the definitive Ed Wood biography) used to make a relentlessly exuberant

THE GREAT PRETENDER



racket in the early 80s with free jazz giants Beaver Hills and Arthur Doyle as the group Blue Humans. Inviting Grey onto radio show he hosted, Licht cannily engineered an invitation to perform with Grey on a bill at the Knitting Factory in New York, where he got to meet sympathetic minds like Thurston Moore and Donald Miller for the first time.

Licht was soon splitting his time between two ensembles: the reconstituted Blue Humans with Grey and drummer Tom Seargeant, and Love Child, an adventurous indie rock outfit which imploded on the cusp of being the Next Big Thing. "I was really into having things very polarized," he says of his double life. "That's the way I listen to music, so I just figured, 'Why not?'"

Yet playing in groups as stylistically diverse as Love Child and Blue Humans was still untypical behaviour in the early 90s. "I certainly didn't know of anybody else who was doing it," Licht asserts. "It's not like Donald Miller had a pop band in his closet."

But the last few years have witnessed a shift in attitudes, with lapsed rockers drifting into areas such as free improvisation and digital music. "It's a lot more common now to find someone who likes both Tony Conrad and Edith Frost," says Licht. "When I started doing this stuff the audience was much more mutually exclusive. There were people who were fans of my guitar playing in Love Child who couldn't deal with The Blue Humans."

Art and rock impulses collided with much more frequency in Run On, a group founded in 1993 by Rick Brown and Sue Garner, which Licht joined in its infancy. Despite an astounding collective pedigree, they never seemed to get the breaks any 'challenging' group needs to survive. Though their *Start Picking* and *No Way* albums were well received for their sharp songwriting and adventurous arrangements, the group ended their five year association with Matador in June. What with everyone now involved in separate projects, it's unlikely they'll play together again.

For his part, Licht had never stopped pursuing extramusical activities, including an ongoing duo with Loren Mazzacane Connors, which has produced three full-length recordings and some memorable concerts. The singularity of Connors's lyrical, high lonesome wail would seem to preclude accompaniment, but Licht sublimates his more gregarious nature to the duo's fluid, sparse interactions, while remaining open to the unexpected detour, as evidenced toward the end of *Mercury*, the most recent and riveting of their releases.

Their upcoming Drag City release *Hoffman Estates*, however, places them in an

altogether different context. Given the paucity of people with tastes as catholic as Jim O'Rourke and Alan Licht, a collaboration between them was inevitable. The common ground for this particular project was a fondness for 70s Miles Davis epics, like *Jack Johnson and Get Up With It*. With Connors and Licht taking on the roles of Davis and his musicians, O'Rourke assumed the mantle of producer Teo Macero. "It was Jim's production all the way," says Licht. "He brought Loren and I out and totally organized the sessions. Everything was improvised straight to DAT in one afternoon, then he overdubbed himself and with others for the next week, and edited the thing down to its current form."

Also a fan of Licht's writing, O'Rourke has commissioned him to write sleeve notes for the CD reissue of an album by the truly underground English guitarist Ray Russell, on O'Rourke's new Mokai imprint. "After Kaiser turned me onto [the late Japanese free noise guitarist] Masayuki Takayanagi and all that stuff, I asked him who else was playing like that back then and he mentioned Ray Russell," Licht recalls. "When I met Rudolph a couple of years later, he played me Russell's *Secret Asylum* album. Rudolph's piece 'Implosion 73' is basically a Ray Russell tribute."

I'm standing in a tiny rock club waiting for Licht to take the stage as last minute support for punk core Fugate. The relative incongruity of the billing isn't lost on the latter's dishevelled teen legion. Licht nonchalantly appears onstage and proceeds to float out an ocean of steel strangled waves, making subtle melodic permutations over a clutch of notes caught and looped rhythmically by his delay pedal. The Reichian soundwall hypnotizes even the rowdiest of would-be hecklers.

Touching ground again half an hour later, he pauses quickly to return, then launches into a spare but utterly earnest version of The Who's "Baba O'Riley", positively perplexing his already confused charges. It strikes me that the opening piece actually served as an extended meditation on the latter song's famous intro, which Pete Townshend had copied from Terry Riley in the first place. Licht agrees, even as the correction hadn't occurred to him before. Does Licht have any straight rock ambitions left after a decade of post-rock perversions? "My actual rock 'n' roll dream is to be lead guitarist in The Pretenders," he enthuses. "I mean, Chrissie Hynde would be unbearable, but I think I would be good. I would try to put up with whatever it would take to do it." □ *Hoffman Estates* is released in mid-November on Drag City.

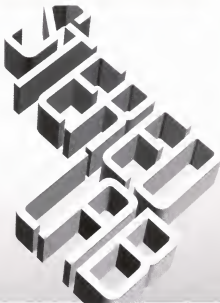
Alan Licht (2nd right) with Run On



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Bob Dylan's reputation as a brilliant
has declined, shifting the focus to Dylan

the singer

There are sirens, there are foghorns, and there is Bob Dylan. In 1966, as is well known, Dylan was bobbing precariously in treacherous waters, with thousands of folk mullahs sniping at him from the shore. With The Hawks (aka The Band) behind him, the former folk hero had cast his voice onto crackling frequency oceans of heavily amplified music, and the mullahs, jealous guardians of roots traditions, were outraged.

"Judas" you can hear one accuser scream on the recently released *Bob Dylan Live 1966: Royal Albert Hall Concert* (actually recorded in Manchester), while Dylan and Robbie Robertson are tuning their guitars for the closing song, "Like a Rolling Stone." "I don't believe you. You're a liar," Dylan spits back, before instructing The Hawks, "Play fucking loud."

That begins one of the most recognizable vocal performances in the history of electric music. Pumped up on volume, Dylan and The Hawks rip into their buccaneering noise with renegade ferocity, their shanty organ and scything guitars creating, whining, distorting and crashing behind the drums, as they heave the song through its endless peaks and falls. Though the music is pitching precariously back and forth, Dylan's vocal

keeps an even keel. Forced to compete with the volume, he times his delivery to begin at the crest of each riff. In the split second the abyss opens up below, Dylan fires off his lines, each one resonating loudly against the yawning emptiness, their endings curtailed by clipped guitars. Suspended across the crevice between the rolling riffs, the sound of the voice is remarkable — taut as a wire, spun whiplash thin and snapping back on itself the moment the line is unfurled.

Sometimes, it's like a foghorn blasting forlornly across the desolate night, the way which The Hawks open up in the song. Elsewhere, it's a siren, otherworldly and beautiful, summoning you into the abyss. His phrasing, too, is extraordinarily elastic. When he is not weighing a sentence with a novel's lead, he is stretching the last word of a staccato sung phrase — "Do you wanna make a deal?" — to fill a whole line's length, unwaveringly holding the note while The Hawks tread water for an eternity beneath him. For the duration

of the note, its timbre unlocks the complexity of emotions behind its performance. It is at once hurt, angry, bitter, coquettish and poisonous. But it also reveals the extent of the singer's vulnerability, and never before has he sounded so young. When Dylan went electric, he finally got to sing his age.

Unlike Caruso, Bob Dylan was not born with the gift of a golden voice. That it has often been a great one is

down to the singer's own choice not to allow his commonly perceived shortcomings — abrasive tone, grating nasality, unevenness, wayward pitching — to get in the way of the needs of the song. When he started out in 1960, a Minnesota kid adrift in New York City's coffee shop folk circuit, he sang himself hoarse to make his voice fit the ancient folk, blues and cowboy ballads he was singing. Never short of self-belief, he sang the blues like a sharecropper, and Country folk with a hillbilly twang. If he began as a brilliant mimic, his own distinctive voice emerged soon enough, along with the hundreds of songs now pouring out of him. From early on his distinguishing traits were in place — the breathing fire that allowed him to hold notes forever, the sudden leaps, superlative phrasing and, above all, playfulness. Then there were the performer's tricks, when he'd come on like, say, the Nabob of Sob, weeping through the cracked tones and timbres that underscore the tearful plea of a blues like "Gonna, Gonna."

Within two years he'd become the reluctant voice of a generation. He was writing songs that shared its beliefs and articulated its fears. The irony of being lionized by the folk sector for the truths he was singing in an ageless blues voice when he was barely into his twenties was not lost on Dylan. The folks might have prized honesty and authenticity, but only the kinds you could wear as a badge, it seemed. No wonder he quickly became disillusioned with the folk scene and went over to rock, where he could act his age.

Before he was crippled by self-awareness, however, Dylan was fully capable of honestly expressing his



Above: Dylan in 1966 and (inset) in 1997

songwriter overshadows his exciting, if erratic singing voice. Over the years, his writing output as a performer with the experience to put flesh on the bones of his early songs. Words: Biba Kopf

not the song . . .

thoughts in his old man's voice. After all, he was, and still is, a performer, and performance necessitates a degree of play-acting. The illusion of integrity is preserved in the conviction of the performance. Dylan's early catalogue is scattered with brilliant and convincing performances, by turns breath-taking, hilarious, heartbreaking and terrifying. Only people whose proffered leasurewear is a long white robe and hood would fail to be moved by his singing of "The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll", from his third album *The Times They Are A' Changin'*. Casting a crime report as a lament, Dylan sketches the details of a poor black maid's murder and the circumstances of her life with a weirdly impersonated objectivity that runs counter to the lament's rising and falling cadences. But once he's through with the facts, and the full extent of the injustice is exposed, his controlled anger gives way to the closing verse's outpouring of grief.

From the same period, a rare live recording of Dylan duetting with folk saint Joan Baez in 1963 graphically illustrates his divergence from the scene's suffocating dittos on content and form. Performing one of Dylan's most platitudinous protest pieces, "With God On Our Side", at Newport Folk Festival, the contrast between their two voices says it all in the way Dylan's seems to be tagging away from Baez's sanctimonious and doting embrace of his hollow lyrics. The audience's rapturous approval of his message, with complete disregard to its quality, must have surely intensified Dylan's will to rock.

Not only is the company better, the music's more fun.

Dylan's reputation as

rock's poet laureate, predicated on his three mid-60s electric records, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*, has always overshadowed his genius as a performer. His artistry is still assessed on the strength of his songs, yet he has hardly been off the road since his American comeback tour with The Band in 1974. Compared to the thousands of hours logged on the road, writing and recording command a comparatively small percentage of his output. Regardless, it has been a commonplace to write him off as a spent force after a poor album release, even as he has been going out night after night, evolving his performance skills, and restlessly reworking songs from a repertoire stretching back almost 40 years, improving new games to play and finding new things to say in them.

Over the decades the mysteries of a voice that seemed to change annually — from *Blonde On Blonde*'s velvet whiplash, through the bizarrely muttering Country croon of the late 60s, to the brittle Metal roar of his brilliant mid-70s albums and Rolling Thunder tours — have resolved into the singular voice that has carried him through the 90s.

As the decade began, his credibility had reached an all time low. In the 80s he released a succession of poor to indifferent albums, alleviated by the occasional affecting recording — the bleakly sung spiritual "Death Is Not The End", the blues apocalypse of "Blind Willie McTell" — and the mixed blessing of 1989's *On Mercy*. And it was difficult to work out the motivation behind the endless tours he undertook, as a good many of them were joyless affairs for listless performer and audience alike.

From the beginning of the 90s, Dylan suffered a serious songwriting drought, which only finally let up with the release last year of *Time Out Of Mind*. Paradoxically, he seemed to rediscover pleasure and purpose in performance, first with a pair of acoustic covers albums, and then on the road with his best support group since The Band.

Now in his late 50s, his voice has naturally enough lost its youthful elasticity, for which Dylan the performer compensates with his ever inventive phrasing. Yet his weathered tones give the older songs which he shuffles through his constantly changing concert repertoires the patina of experiences he couldn't have had when he wrote them. Where he used to dazzle the 60s with his precocious brilliance, in the 90s his performances have real conviction.

Words alone are never enough. Until the grain of the voice sparks word from sound and fuses them in song, they are inert and expressionless. Nothing if not all grain, Dylan's 90s voice is scarred with a lifetime's loneliness that is the lot of the restless troubadour, hauling his songs from town to town. If the downside is his habitual solitude, the gain is the grain that authenticates the 15 minute passage from rage against time to resignation at its passing in the song "Highlands", which closes *Time Out Of Mind*. This late in his career, Bob Dylan has lost none of his capacity to leave his listeners devastated by the revelation that is his voice. □ Bob Dylan Live 1966 is out now on Columbia Legacy

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a music track or a pair of records without any of the usual commentary and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

Squarepusher

Tested by Rob Young

Squarepusher, aka 23-year-old Tom Jenkinson, grew up in Chelmsford, South East England. A self-taught bassist, he joined various local groups while still at school. In the early 90s, inspired by the high-velocity post-Acid House breakbeats emanating from London, and an encounter with Richard James (aka Aphex Twin), he obtained primitive sampling and sequencing equipment and, from his bedroom, developed the fusion of crunchy, bombarding jungle, plus hyperactive bass, that became his trademark. These first efforts were released as the *Alloy Road Tracks 1.2"* by The Duke Of Haringay, on the eccentric Brighton label Spymunk. An energetic, often glib, self-aware, not averse to heckling the crowd, Jenkinson became popular in the London club circuit in the mid-90s, before releasing his debut album, *Feed Me Weird Things*, on Rephlex in 1996. Following *1.2"* for Virgin, *Feed Me* and *Wormholes*, he was signed by Warp in a 1997 year-end move. Home to *Garage*, *Hard Normal Daddy*, *Interstuck*, *Feed Me* is a thoroughly "loose" collection of weird ideas, the weirdest *Wormholes*. One Minute, *Wormholes* (which I've also played) were played by Jenkinson. He currently lives in Sheffield; the Jukebox took place during a brief visit to London.





JACO PASTORIUS

"Slung (Bass Solo)" from *Weather Report: The Jaco Years* (Columbia/Sony)

[After five seconds] Jaco

That chord... the vibrato, is

unmistakably Jaco. I'll never forget the first time I saw him on a video. I was just enraptured by what he was putting into the instrument, I've never seen that happen before. Stunning.

Do you listen to a lot of fusion?

I actually find *Weather Report* as an ensemble quite painful, to be honest. It seems like a bit of a Joe Zawinul show, with Jaco and Wayne Shorter tagging along, and it's a bit pompous for me. There's bits and pieces, but when Jaco joined, it went really shit. I think the earliest stuff is the best. Zawinul played on Miles's *Bitches Brew* and in *A Silent Way*, that to me is a much more important piece of music than the majority of late *Weather Report*.

This music was never very fashionable at the time you were playing in your early teenage groups. Was that a problem for you?

I was never really conscious of that, because I wanted to play in every band that was going. I had so much enthusiasm, I would want to play a gig every night if I could. I was in three or four bands at a time until I moved out of home. I really enjoy watching someone effervescence when they're playing. It excites me. [Techno] anonymity always confused me — I often used to wander around clubs, thinking: am I the only person in this room wondering what could be done, and how it could be injected with some sort of idea of a performance? Because it's very anti-art, or seemed to be. And pretty communistic — DJs are the purveyors of music, and it's just accepted by the mass.

Did you take any bass lessons?

No. It didn't seem to be necessary. I think I'm seen as a bit of a mosey-y, boffing thing. 'Oh yeah, he plays loads of notes per second and that makes it music.' That's fair enough, but I put those notes in because I think they're in the right place.

You seem to prefer speed and clutter more than space and changes of pace...

Yeah! Things are changing a bit for me, but I still love being completely immersed. I never really got into minimal music. I admit that playing and watching and getting a good reaction, and having people enjoy it, is an ego-centric thing, but it's not necessarily so much about that. I'm into people, and people's energy.

DJ TRAX

"We Rock The Most" from the CD accompanying Simon Reynolds's book *Energy Flash*

I didn't know music like this existed on CD. This is 92 Hackney Hardcore, I'd say. Is it *Moving Shadow*? It's not *Cosmo & Dibbs* is it? It's funny hearing it on CD, because I'm used to hearing this on really filthy vinyl. Not so much *Moving Shadow*, because they were always quite a professional operation. Who would this be?

You might know the individuals responsible for the track, if not the name they're using here.

Not 4 Hero, is it? No, this doesn't sound like them [Listens for a while].

It's DJ Trax, an alias for Moving Shadow boss Bob Playford and Devro Davies. You're right about the date.

Why didn't I say that? It's such an obvious one. I definitely haven't heard this track before. When I was first hearing this sort of stuff, it was the ultimate. When you hear it now, it sounds thin, and a bit funny, but at the time it was like end of the world music, because it didn't give a shit. It was more punk than punk was. It was playfulness without any regard for anything at all. People were kicking things off other people's tracks — you'd hear the same riff, but sped up a bit, and a bit out of time, so the loop was wrong. It was like *Armageddon* [laughs].

I didn't get into House music or 4/4 with regular electronic sounds until 1990, so I missed the Acid thing. I was hearing the earliest breakbeat manifestations from Hip House, which idiosyncratically broke the breakbeat scene over here. And then suddenly it was like a race, and the bpm's started getting faster and faster year by year. It felt like everything's been torn to pieces, everything's falling apart completely. And at the time I related to it because it was using drum breaks, and that was where I really came in. 14 year olds absolutely flocked out of their brains were coming into shops asking for Hardcore white labels, literally any white labels, picking up an armful of flyers, and going out of the shop again. I still associate that sound with going to raves and seeing people up against walls, shivering and hardly able to move.

On your earliest tracks, were you trying to rise out as much of the energy and speed of breakbeat as possible?

Yeah. There's also an attitude about which says that somehow I got into drum 'n' bass around 95/96, went in, took all the best bits, and tuned them up, and now I'm no longer interested. It was not really the case. Basically I've been trying to do that repetitive break thing, which to me was trying to make punk systematic: how can you get these beats to win your brain out as much as possible? There was a bpm climax for the earlier breakbeat stuff in '93, I was just using a drum machine — it was a 140/150 [bpm] vibe — and the last thing I put out which I consider to be part of that was [1997's] *Big Loud*, where all the tracks are 190 consistently.

Now, everything's fizzled out again, and everything's really random. New weird projects are springing up and it's another fertile period again. This is going to sound pretentious, but I've just been reading about the way planets form, and the origins of life, and planets coagulating out of big balls of dust. I see it like that at the moment: loads of people quite separate, doing stuff. Maybe we're going to have another race, but in a different dimension.

SOFT MACHINE

"Facellit" from *Third* (BGO Records)

[Mike Ratledge's organ starts very gradually.] Ooh. Miles Davis. No — I can't. That weird distorted organ-y thing reminded me of those early, really raspy, stampy 70s

live performances. No, it's not at all, is it [Listens].

Right organ, wrong place. It's by a group who were turned around by those Miles records, among others. Yeah, it has to be 70-75. This is obviously influenced by it. It reminds me of Miles At Fillmore East.

It's an English group — this is a long keyboard intro. It reminded me of a lot of textures on your new record.

Yeah — fifty. Even down to the chord progressions. But... England? Is it one of the members of the Prog group? Not *Tangerine Dreams* is it?

Fans of this group probably wouldn't tarnish them with a name like 'Prog'.

I'm just thinking of all the keyboard players in British bands of this era, and there's no way they would do this kind of thing. They were always quite conservative, from what I know of them.

It's *Soft Machine* — this track is 16 minutes long. They specialised in jamming, working up long, freely evolving pieces.

There's something to be learnt from that approach in my opinion. There's a big spectrum of music from around that time, with big jams going on for ages, and different things happening. I really love and enjoy a lot of that music, and I've taken part in a lot of stuff in that mode. But there's something about the 90s where I simultaneously love that idea of things happening spontaneously, but to release that on records — there's something to be learned by really trying to tune in. I think a lot of the time, these jams feel quite airy. **You're saying the musician now has to be a good editor as well, cut out the dead spots?**

Yeah, precisely. I think musicians have got the responsibility for that, and nowadays it's available, because I can personally have my own studio, so I can realise. 'This is going on a bit.' There's something about the extended solo which — there aren't enough hours in the day.

It's maybe symptomatic of our current era that we're so used to squashing everything together — we do so much in a day, that maybe there isn't time for those moments any more. I can always make room. I'm probably a survivor of this era, I'm not being killed by it, but I think a lot of people are. We're being pulled apart completely, as people, and by society itself. No one had heard of global concerns in the 70s, but suddenly anyone with any sort of conscience is wondering if we're still going to be alive in 30 years' time.



ALEC EMPIRE

"Lash The 90ties" from *Generation Star Wars* (Mile Plateaux)

[Over beatless intro.] I keep thinking this is going to be a drum 'n' bass track, because there's that chord

modulating up and down. But this sounds different. [Beat kicks in.] This has got to be pretty new, basically, hasn't it?

It's 40 years old now, but it could have been released this week.

I'll tell you what it sounds like to me: the drum rhythm

reminds me of Mike Paradinas's drum production — it sounds like an HR-16, or a gopko old drum machine with loads of sweep in it, and totally distorted. But it's too direct for Mike Paradinas — too 'on it.' It's quite genuinely emotion-raising, without being too nasty to Mike. It's got a Detroit-y, American flavour to it somehow. It's a weird one. It's timeless as well. I suppose it's maybe by German Ambient people? It's got to be German. [Track ends]

It's Alec Empire.

[Surprised] Is it really? Bloody hell. That's actually a surprise, to be honest with you. I first heard Alec Empire in 95, and it was a really heavy, distorted Jungle track but with a lack of funky vibe — not being nasty to Alec. I think he's sorted.

There's a strong political dimension to Empire's music which is lacking in most other 'Star Wars generation' Electronica — why do you think Techno is so unapologetic?

He is very political about his music, and even though I don't always enjoy it, you can hear that militant aspect. He's got something to say, and he's not scared about it either. I can see what makes him angry as well, because it's the same shit that makes me angry. He looks around and sees no voice of dissent in his own generation. That's probably the main thing that pulls me towards his music. I think with people my age — early twenties — no one's interested in politics as a force of change. We've just inherited an apathetic 'Oh well, we can't do anything about it' attitude from the Thatcher years, rolling on in this unstoppable reign. It drummed it into us that there wasn't anything you could do if you didn't like this person. You just had to stick to it.

There's nothing explicitly political in your music? Would you like there to be?

Not at all. It's an idea which was stated most eloquently by Carl Jung in a book called *Man and His Symbols*. 'Yes, we have gone past the point of accessing political issues, we are beyond God — God is dead, so where do we look? And we don't know where to look. Basically what he says is, we have to look back inside, and reacquaint ourselves with the primitive mind. He argues that in the 20th century we've just obsessed with 'one plus one equals two' rationality. Politics has lost that, political parties aren't really the people in control of the world any more. People know that, and I think that's a lot to do with the fact that there are stockers everywhere saying 'Don't vote' [Jung's] saying, look back inside and reacquaint ourselves with the primitive, instinctive, the old mind, if you like. That will itself reveal where we've got to go.

There's this '90s spirituality thing, all the New Age shops and stuff, and it's quite token, but you can sense people are yearning for something else, and I think there is maybe a turning point on the horizon. That's my viewpoint, and with what I do, I'm attempting to reacquaint myself with a part of me which can almost be an autopilot. That's the only way we're ever really going to go forward.



CHARLES MINGUS QUINTET "Lady Bird" from *The Charles Mingus Quintet Plus Max Roach (Fantasy)*

The bassist is the key element? It's not Mingus, is it? Very, very good — it's lovely. I'd say it was 62? 60?

It was recorded in 1955.

Don't know this one.

You once told me you're a fan of older jazz and bebop — do you source breaks from this far back?

Well, I never studied music, so consequently the only history I really know is my own, that I've constructed. And what I got from these early jazz records is an element of excitement, and personality. I get a clear feeling of invention, and happiness that it's happening. A lot of it's melodically dated, and it has got that problem of sounding a bit sentimental nowadays, but when I started listening, and researching my own jazz history, the main thing I gained from it was this sense of positivity and excitement about a musical form which seems open. You see combos playing this stuff now down at Pizza Express and it's quite sad. It's killing it.

This kind of music is like having a conversation, involving varying degrees of geniality or confrontation.

There's the Q&A thing. The first jazz drummer I played with, when I was 15, just said, 'Let's do question and answer — you do four bars, and I'll do four bars.' That dialectical thing in music seems quite absent now — I really enjoy that, and it had an early impact. The conversational aspect of early jazz is an important thing to me. I'm always overexplaining things, saying far too much, but maybe I just adore communication between people, and I try to synthesize that on my own.

All your recordings are made when you're alone, so are you talking to yourself?

It's very difficult — very few of us live with a genuine sense of community, and I think that's reflected in music as well. You can hear individuals, but not individuals flourishing, really.

In Techno especially, it can be more like individuals trying to march in step.

Instead of relating to each other within the context of a combo, people are relating to each other across a musical genre. We're trying to say something, but all we can do is mutually affirm each other, because we know so little about each other. All we can do is advance and hope we're going the right way.

I think the climax of [musicians] working together, for me, is mid-60s Coltrane quartet — Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison. When I listen to those recordings, there seems to be a communication which is ascendant. There's definitely a massive religious subtext to it, of ascendance, and trying to go beyond physicality. You get the feeling they weren't thinking about what they were playing when they were doing it — they were there, you know? I yearn for that.

So you're not uncomfortable with the notion of spirituality in music?

'Course not. Again, a lot of people will laugh at me when I say it, but I really am trying to do that. I'm struggling, because as yet I haven't met anyone who I feel I can work with. I'm lucky that I've got an immense amount of energy internally. I do feel like I've got almost enough energy to bypass the fact that other people aren't fueling me. But on my own, somehow, I am trying to put together some sort of ascendant thing. That's what I've always valued in music — being taken up. I'm not religious, in the sense of attending church or subscribing to one particular religion, but I envy people who are religious and can stay within it, because I know that they must feel better than I do. It gives a point, There's a meaning to it all. And our source culture has robbed us of that completely.



PRINCE "The Balad Of Dorothy Parker" from *Sign 'O' The Times* (Paisley Park/Warner)

[When vocal starts] Prince, obviously. It's just not quite the Prince that I know.

He's obviously been listening to Electro and totally twisted it. He also plays every instrument on this album.

Yeah, Prince was an all-rounder.

Your new LP features you playing all the instruments?

Yeah, it's all me, layer by layer. Everything on that LP was always kicked off by the drums. I'd just sit there for four minutes and play, and try to form a structure by listening to it. Then start adding around it, and edit it, loosely try to get an idea of what could happen, and then bang on a keyboard and see what happens.

You record quickly?

Oh yeah — it was all recorded fucking quickly. I spent a bit more time in production. But this [track] is an interesting one. When I was young, Prince was one of those people who was always on the periphery — I could never quite relax and get into him. I can hear a lot of Betty Davis [wife of Miles] — that dark, sexual, really quite tense seduction aspect. That's the element that gets me most about his stuff. He's not scared about being like that — he's hovering between being a sexy man and a sexy woman [laughs]. That's the bit which I get into most, because I'm into perverses, definitely. I think I'm completely perverted myself, actually.

How does that express itself?

[Laughs] In ways which I'd better not talk about. But with Prince, he's very much the zealot — he's always flown with the times. He's always got a spin on pop which is relevant. Even with House of Gainsbourg stuff in 1990, I remember all that. But he's a bit too normal for me, to really get me going. Phew, who is this geezer, what is he up to? It's a bit too clear for me — I wish it was more perverted. There's definitely room for more perversion in music [laughs].

THROBBING GRISTLE

"Catholic Sex" from *Journey Through A Body* (Grey Area Of Music)

[Listens for several minutes] Their attitude to composition is really musique concrete, even disregarding the steady rhythm.

This is completely improvised, apparently. [There are] found sounds, not strung together randomly; there certainly seems to be an order in there, which is why I suppose in my head I attributed it to musique concrete. But this is very strange. I reckon it's definitely 80s. I reckon it's 84.

A little earlier — it's *Throbbing Gristle*, from 1981.

Is it *Throbbing Gristle*? I was going to say, it's got a bit of a Coil sound.

Good guess — Coil's Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson is one of the musicians.

That early 80s Industrial thing, I do actually genuinely find it scary — it does intimidate me. Coil's the main thing that I would relate to this, and that stuff has got a brutality which couldn't have happened in the 90s. It's got an 80s darkness, that's how I see stuff like this. Am I right in thinking that these people were all art school related?

Genesis P-Orridge was involved in *British Fables* happenings in the early 70s... You went to art school, didn't you?

Yeah. I went to Chelsea, actually. I dropped out before it finished. It was one of the biggest anticlimaxes of my life, absolutely dismal. I was trying to do sonic art and experimental notation — I was really interested for a period in John Cage. More from his intellectual standpoint: the results of his music were not necessarily as pleasing as reading his dialogue. And I thought, this is going to be such fertile ground.

Did you get anywhere at all with this?

No. I had quite a job convincing my tutors that doing any kind of sonic art was relevant. Out of sheer frustration, I ended up playing a live piece of music in a gallery. Everyone else had stuck things on the wall, and I thought I'd take my studio down there. It just went nowhere. It hardly introduced a dialogue about music — [people said] 'We don't understand this, it's just entertainment, it's not art, and that was it [laughs]. Very sad, actually. I just had drum machines and maver and played an improvised piece for half an hour. It actually appeared to get the most reaction from people who went, which was cool, but I wasn't quite confident enough in my standing in the art college to convince the people who were running it to support me. And consequently I left.

[Now] music seems a far more democratic mode of operation. Music is about reproduction — reproducing hundreds of copies, however many copies people want — and the concept of the 'original' is a long way away. Anyone who wants my music can hear it as well as I can hear it. There's no difference between my DAT copy and a CD of it. I still felt this [attitude] lingering on within the art school set-up. This is the original, and this is a gallery, and when we put things in galleries, it means a lot. One of Cage's points is that the moment is the most important moment, and once it's gone, it's thin air.

POLYGON WINDOW

"Supremacy II" from *Surfing On Sine Waves* (Warp)

[Immediately] Oh, Aphex Twin. [aka] Polygon Window. Which track?

Is it "Quotidian"? Oh, "Supremacy II." I never really remember track titles of anyone's music. This stuff was completely mindboggling when I first heard it.

Richard James amusingly described his first meeting with you on his sleeveboxes to your debut album *Feed Me*. *World Things*. Was it an accurate account?

It's pretty similar. Aphex made a large impact on me from the first time I heard him. The people I idolised from the past were creative people who seemed on a tangent, but Aphex, when he steamrolled into the whole Techno scene, suddenly rendered most of the scene completely bland and meaningless, because it was so colourful.

Can you put your finger on exactly what that quality was?

Well, the thing which fires me off on most music, which I love, is a way of making anger and happiness meaningful, capturing it and communicating it. Instead of things that are all-out blasts, and maybe because I'm English, I like the sound of controlled rage. A lot of this stuff sounded to me tense, but able to flow as well.

There's a lot of anger in Aphex Twin as well?

Yeah. I think we all have [anger], but most of us don't know how to harness it, and make it anything more culturally important than road rage [laughs]. That seems to be the main manifestation.

What was it like hanging-out with him in North London a few years ago?

It was a bit of a changing point for me, because suddenly [there was] someone I knew who was one of the creators of my musical history, one of the people who had set it up. That was very strange, because they share all the same flaws and problems that I'm sure plague most people. It's just that by some fluke of development, they've been able to tune in and phase out interference.

It was [an] extremely hectic [period], and when we first met, the race I was talking about was intensified, doubled three times over. It was like a conversation, actually, going between us, from 95-97. It wasn't like we were trying to better each other, or at least if it was, we never came out in the open about it. We were just like, 'Oh yeah, man, that's wicked', and then turn up the next week with another DAT. 'Check this out [laughs]. But it was brilliant. I don't see him so much now I live in Sheffield. That period's definitely over, and he's concerned with different things to me now.

Such as?

Every time I see him he seems to be programming computers. I'm not so sure if he's concerned with music any more — I don't know.

IANNIS XENAKIS

"5.709" from *Electronik Music* (Electronic Music Foundation)

Any idea which side of the fence this comes from — academic computer composition or 'the street'?

[After listening for a while] Well, it's very difficult, isn't it? For some reason or other, the first thing that popped into my head was Iannis Xenakis.

That's right. It's from 1992 — some of his recent experiments with software.

His approach fascinates me — the spatial element of his music. He's really relating sound to space. He was an architect, wasn't he? The idea of wiring a piece of music in relation to the particular resonant and acoustic dimensions of a room, or a hall or theatre — it's very appealing.

The noise element of this piece could conceivably have come from a bedroom type musician as well, couldn't it?

Yeah, I was wondering — the slamming together of sounds — I suppose what Aphex and me ended up doing was barking at musique concrete, in a backdoor sort of way. These two things are from completely different circumstances. One music is formed in the embrace of an institution, and one music is street kids saying, 'This is our sound, man — whatever' [laughs]. And the intellectual disparity is absolutely huge.

Musique concrete seemed unredemptive for a long time, and now it's being cited by all kinds of younger mixers...

Yeah, nipping it up. But once we look at it in any great depth, we see that the links are there to be made, and they're meaningful. Like garage music, something which has grown up in isolation from our Western heritage. And yet we've come to a point now where I can see parallels, and it's spooky. Because this is music that really has a very hermetic background. People are producing Techno with no idea of garage, and yet it's happening — the synchronicity is continually fascinating. People are doing things from different starting points, but ending up barking up the same tree.





the idea of north

Icelandic singer **Björk** has not let worldwide success cramp her desire for musical experiment. of the 'soulful experimentalists' — from Stockhausen to 808 State — who keep her world turning



On the contrary, she has used her fame to raise the profile
Words: Louise Gray. Photography: Frank Bauer



Lucky old Iceland: In recent months, two of its most famous children have returned to its shores. One of them stands on front of me, balancing on the rocks along the stoner boundaries of Reykjavik harbour, humming into the wind, seemingly indifferent to the torrent below. It's Björk Guðmundsdóttir, having her photograph taken. The other is Keiko, aka Freed Willy, the killer whale of movie legend, who has been getting a froster reception: "Killer whales bite the tongues of nice whales, then play with them," claims one of Björk's assistants indignantly, as a small rockfall slides into the sea. "And there was the American press romanticising the whole thing!"

Reykjavik is a small city, and the bright, cold air doesn't make for loitering. Of the few passers-by who notice that it's Björk out there on the rocks, hardly any of them give her a second glance. You begin to understand why Iceland's most famous export has come home. In an interesting reversal of the fame game, she is afforded

most privacy in the one place in the world where she is best known — 22 years in the business made her a household name here even before international acclaim chimed in.

Born in 1966, Björk's career started prodigiously early. She recorded her first album aged just 11. Principally a collection of folk songs, it also contained the first Björk original, an instrumental tribute to Icelandic artist Jóhannes Kjalvi. She went on to play in the prankster punk groups Exókus, Tappi Tíkarrass (felicitously translated as "Cork The Bitch's Arse") and Kuki. When their occult anarchofunk looked like settling into a fixed pattern, Kuki self-immolated, like all decent punk groups should. And when the smoke died down, Björk and fellow conspirator Einar Örn rose from the ashes of their blackness dressed in the brighter primary colours of The Sugarcubes. Comprising a sextet of poets and musicians organised around an arts lab idea — they formed the publishing and recording collective Bad Taste — they recast themselves as a pop group, albeit one that recognised none of pop's usual limitations. Their debut single "Birthday" was released in 1987, the year before Acid House was to sweep across Europe. It was a post-rock affair before the concept was invented, infected with funk, and as such it sealed the burgeoning alliance between rock, dance and dreampop. But Björk's voice was the disc's real revelation. It was at once phee-like and operatic sized, and even as it sounded untampered and untutored, it effortlessly led the song through its every whoop and leap. For all The Sugarcubes' collective talents, the singer was undoubtedly the one to watch. And so it turned out: Sugarcubes disintegrated after three albums — *Life's Too Good*, *Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week and Still Around For Joy* — but their Bad Taste art collective still thrives, championing an impressive amount of Icelandic literature, legends and music, ranging from new groups such as Unruh and Sigur Rós, to contemporary composers such as Thorkell Sigurðsson and Sveinn Lúdvík Björnsson.

Once solo, Björk began a long-term studio relationship with Massive Attack programmer Nellee Hooper and BOB State's Graham Massey, and musicians Talvin Singh and Marcus De Vries. Her first album *Debut*, a year in the making, launched Björk as the 90s' least likely superstar. Well, can you name another with roots buried deep in Icelandic occult anarchofunk syndicalism, who champions the music of Stockhausen and Arvo Part in her spare time?

And now, after several years in London, where fame became an unignorable burden, she's back in Iceland. It may not guarantee anonymity, but it offers the kind of balance of ordinariness and secrecy that she can call home.

"I thought I could organise freedom/How Scandinavian of me" — Björk, "Hunter"

This tension between home and not-home is the theme of Björk's latest single, "Hunter", taken from her third solo album *Homogenic* (1997). It's an extraordinary, mesmeric song comprising growling martial beats, swooping strings that merge Andalusian heat with a froster climate, and a vocal that oscillates between steely-edged determination and uncontained freedom. Its video treatment, in which a bald Björk morphs between human and polar bear, is no less extraordinary. Directed by Paul White, longtime art director to The Sugarcubes and Björk, the

video's post-production work at James Cameron's studios, brought the costs up to £250,000. Surprisingly, given its special effects budget, it is deeply affecting. In the muffled surroundings of a hotel cafe, Björk offers a brief synopsis: "You leave home, you travel, go nuts and then the moment comes where you've hunted enough experiences and you realise that you could sit down in this house, with these people and be fine for the rest of your life. It's about a moment like that," she pauses, clicking her fingers at the decisive point. "It's about the argument between hunting experiences and stopping and settling."

"Hunter" also tackles shape-changing, the idea of transfiguration that is the core of shamanic power. You sense that magic is very much alive in Iceland, a country that has a stronger affinity than most with its literary and mythological past. Shape-changing is also at the heart of Björk's creative process, insofar as she promotes a state of flux to keep her songs alive. "What you have to do, just to keep sane, is document certain moments. I do it with songs. Five per cent are on the albums, the rest are personal ones I'd never show to anyone. The documentation can be so strong, they get a life of their own. It doesn't happen very often, but take 'Isobel' [from *Post*], it's got almost nothing to do with me any more."

While she was out roadtesting her third album, *Homogenic*, with a full group, The Icelandic String Octet and LFO's Mark Bell on live beats, Björk remarked how her concerts really took off when the internal life of the music took over. Each song would peak at different times through the tour. She recalls, "The whole experience was extremely lush, after all those years of dreaming of creating some sort of ideal situation on stage and not being able to, mostly because of not having the ability as a band leader and not having good enough songs. Now I've got 'good enough' songs from three albums to do a whole gig, plus we had the octet and Mark. It was the first time that people from the album also played live. This tour was just harvest time for me, you plant a lot of seeds and then it just all comes harvest!"

Seeing how Iceland only heard its first symphony orchestra within living memory, the richness of its late 20th century musical harvest has been nothing short of remarkable. As Bad Taste's Ás Jónsson acknowledges, "I feel it's rather weird that we get something that's unique and yet totally Icelandic. Something that doesn't imitate trends and yet is accepted, especially by foreigners. This factor, this capacity to pass barriers, is a most important one in the Icelandic scene."



The worldwide success of Björk's *Debut* might make it the 90s pop album par excellence, but nobody could have predicted just how big it would become. There are few antecedents for so musically adventurous an album seeing the popular imagination so totally. Though her subsequent albums may have pushed the envelope out further, *Debut* remains her most daring release. The album sailed away between dance music and full-scale ballads, but its sounds and textures were drawn from the world beyond dance music. It showcased her gift for combining different musical forces, with the help of her dance-orientated producers Hooper and Massey. Her remit was evidently a wide one: Drawing from her own classical background (she studied piano and flute) and an abiding interest in contemporary composers Stockhausen and Messiaen (experimentalists with whom, she believes, she has been able to unite several areas of music. Her compositional method is more a connective activity than crossover fusion).

"I'm like a transporter," says Björk. "I'm the biggest music fan there is. I'm like all for it, like I could be arrested for it. It's sick. I could talk snare drum sounds for hours. I'm just it. My grandparents listened to jazz and I was in a classical music school for ten years. My mother and stepfather listened to — for want of a better word — hippy music, so I was the odd one out in each group. I used to say to the classical people, 'Come and listen to this jazz.' I was a bit of a David Attenborough, an explorer figure, saying, 'You've got all these green dots, but what about the pink ones?'"

After a brief, considered pause, she continues, "I think style is rubbish, really. I think Stockhausen or Boney M are aiming for the same target, they just don't agree with the methods on how to get there."

And what is her target? Björk gives a quick answer, like she is imparting a secret or revealing the vulnerability that follows the voicing of the extraordinary. "It's a surrender to nature. I guess it's just a place where everything falls into place, where logic doesn't get in the way."

"I just think there's so much abstract stuff going on in daily life. You talk to people, but that's only one per cent of what the communication is really about. There's all this sub-meaning, and music is the only thing I know that can cover all that without being complicated. It's a tough one — all the phrases I know I don't like. It's just a way to get into the middle of yourself. So often you fall over and don't feel connected. A song can be a way of getting there."

Throughout our encounter, it is clear that Björk is battling with exhaustion. That's not to say she's not attentive — she is, with a directness that's warming — but schedules take their toll. The night before she'd flown in late from Denmark, where she had been meeting with the Danish film director Lars Von Trier (*Element of Crime*, *Breaking The Waves*). He had been impressed; it is reported by Björk's stage and vocal presence. She, in turn, was a fan of *Breaking The Waves*. As well as writing the music for his forthcoming musical comedy film, *Dancer In The Dark*, Björk has the starring role as an East European ingenue who goes looking for the Hollywood dream. She's already in Iceland's Greenhouse Studios working on the soundtrack and laying down beats and initial ideas for her next album, scheduled for late 1999. Engineers Valger and Markus Dravs are already on board, as is arranger Einar Deodato and The Icelandic String Octet, but it's too early, she says, to predict what

song will go where in the film.

"I'm experimenting loads, making mosaics and layers. I'm looking forward to writing songs for another person, my film character, though I like to exist on different levels and there's less exposure here. It allows me to stand back, be more of a craftsman."

As her voice tails off, the shifts in her accent indicate the depth of her fatigue. Most of the time, her English is highly fluent, peppered with expressive idioms and rhythmic cadences. As we sit in the gloomy pre-war splendour of Hotel Borg's cafe, Björk switches continually between Icelandic and English as local friends spot her. The Icelandic staccato "Takk, takk," meaning thanks, punctuates the conversation. A chamber orchestra starts up in the next room, and for half an hour, the world is a babble of noises and languages.

In 1989, writer Eva Hoffman published an insightful and lyrical memoir entitled *Lost In Translation* (Minerva Press). The story of her childhood spent in post-war Poland and her family's subsequent translocation to Canada and the USA, it describes, essentially, how a subject is split by the operation of language. In a complete inversion of Gertrude Stein's certainty ("A rose is a rose is a rose"), the Polish Hoffman is not the Canadian Hoffman. They are forever separate people. "The problem is," she writes, "that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. 'River' in Polish was a vital sound, emerged with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of being immersed in rivers. 'River' in English is cold — a word without aura. It has no accumulated associations, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke."

"I never do interviews in Icelandic," says Björk, echoing Eva Hoffman's theme. "It's just too sacred to me. It's just too close."

What, not even with Icelandic journalists?

"I never do interviews here. I decided to make an effort when I was 20 to communicate. I started going abroad with The Sugarcubes. I started singing in English and doing interviews and it's like the language of... I can do an interview in English and pretend to know it all, but I don't really. When I say this, I'm not lying to you, when I talk to you in English it's — arragghh — a tough one."

Icelandic is not a language that Björk uses much in the studio. While her early recordings with Tappi Tíkarrass and Kukl were in her native tongue, by the time The Sugarcubes came along, English had become her professional language. It has remained so ever since the incidence of her using her first tongue, such as for "Vísir Vatnsæda-Rósu" on Hector Zazou's *Songs From The Cold Seas*, are few and far between. (On one notable occasion in America, The Sugarcubes performed an entire concert in Icelandic, prompting one exasperated spectator to shout, "Speak English", to which one of the group responded, "Learn Icelandic".) The separation of a person through the language they use is not only a form of alienation, but also a way of protecting his or her core. If Icelandic is too sacred a language, then does English become a third party, a transitional space, in which to test the waters?

"Yes, but I always write my songs in some sort of gibberish, which is my own language. It's just... whatever. They'll always be Icelandic words there that I can pick out and try to discover what the song is actually about. Then afterwards, I can



put on my logical head and make an English lyric. Do you follow me?" Björk pulls herself up short, looking concerned. "I didn't mean to hurt you if it feels like I am pretending. I'm not. [Language] is just one place that's being saved. It's like you're in your house, you comb your hair, brush your teeth, put your coat on, open the door and then you're ready to meet people. That's English to me. Icelandic is like inside my house. Both worlds are important to me, but I'm not lying outside my house. Am I an Icelandic singer? No, because there is no specific Icelandic sound as such. There never has been. Yes, because I'm influenced by the humour, the mountains, the fact that I'm in a cosmopolitan city, but I can walk for five minutes and be on my own and sing at the top of my voice. Engineers still freak out today because they don't know how to microphone my voice. I learnt to sing acoustically."

Language is a richly ambiguous topic with Björk. Musical or verbal, language is simultaneously a vehicle of emotional truth, a cloaking device, a trickster process. At a second meeting, this time at a restaurant close to her London flat, a more rested Björk explains in these terms her encounter-cum-interview in 1996 with her childhood hero Stockhausen. Introduced to his music as a young adolescent while at music school in Reykjavik, Stockhausen's immediate appeal to her was his electronic music. On closer inspection, Björk found his practices a liberating experience. Written up as an extended Q&A session for a British style magazine, Björk cut to the chase with Stockhausen and the resulting piece — covering everything from the technicalities of his music to his relationship with mystery — showed a real engagement with his ideas.

"I thought, if there's one person I'd like to introduce to young English readers it was Stockhausen," says Björk. "You know, these younger listeners who are obsessed with Electronics and think The Human League invented it. Stockhausen was such a pioneer for that language. There aren't many people who are larger than life, and yet he's one of them. The whole century is in his life. Germany's musical heritage, the Nazi period, personal and global tragedy. [After 1945], he had to completely rediscover his own musical language to make something that was going to be relevant, and I think that's very, very brave. It's also very optimistic. It took a complete disaster, an emotional breakdown, to push him there."

Did his attitude towards experimentation rub off on Björk? "Not with my singing," she replies. "No help comes in there. I just sing what I want to sing and I'm quite happy with the limitations my vocal chords give me. I'm human and I can only be

what I am today, a 32-year-old Icelandic woman, single mother, with the experiences I've got. I can't pretend that I'm a 50-year-old businessman. I don't think it's so much discovering new instruments as it is about being more open-minded in the way you use the existing ones. That's where I'm at."

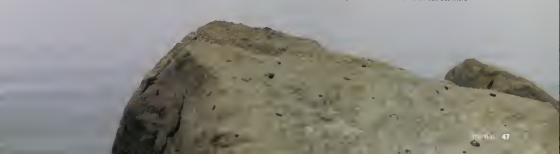
While it's possible to talk about Björk's distinctive vocalising in terms of certain trends in classical music (she recently performed Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Sprechstimme), it's in her studio work that her curiosity and knowledge of experimental music really shows through. The lush soundscapes of *Debut* and the fractured sounds of *Post* and its remixed sibling, *Telegram*, were just tastings behind Homogenic; there's an assemblage of technique and intent that links Björk and her

collaborators of recent years — Tricky, Golde, Mika Vaino of Pan Sonic, Howe B, percussionist Evelyn Glennie — to older innovators such as Cage, Alvin Lucier and La Monte Young. A wider listening shows, too. The uncluttered harmonies of Arvo Part (whom Björk recently charmed into the ground during a TV interview) certainly shone through. Asked what Part's music means to her, Björk is admirably succinct: "A proof that the sublime exists."

While she's reluctant to talk about her own place in the scheme of things ("I can't see my music from the outside," she says), she's quick to identify the current desire for a more numinous music: "Maybe 20th-century music is about a move from the head to the heart. There's this bringing out of spirituality, not just in Part, Gorecki and so on, but in dance music, too. Music of the people. In clubs, you have these moments of the divine. People do these minimal electronics, and it's like a net for spirituality. It's a very risky road, though, because if you only have one or two notes, it doesn't work. It's like the emperor's new clothes; the whole song will collapse."

Working with the Octet has reaped dividends. Much of Homogenic is characterised by a spaciousness that the strings somehow define. She acknowledges the way exposure to this kind of work has helped her develop a greater capacity for experimentation.

"Of course, otherwise it would be pointless," she concludes. "Every minute I spend away from Reykjavik is time wasted, as far as I'm concerned. It's a sacrifice I'm making for music. So for me to come here and make the same album as I did last time would be a complete waste of time. But it's also simply about courage and learning, about having the courage to be innocent somewhere." □ "Huntar" is out now on One Little Indian. Björk tours the UK this month: see Out There.





Ricocheting between avant rock, wired Country, free music summits and banjo recitals of Bach, virtuoso guitarist and arch prankster **Eugene Chadbourne** is the American underground's most disruptive presence. Words: Ben Watson. Photography: Amy & Tanveer



hobo trails

and boho trials

Eugene Chadbourne isn't an easy artist to describe. Born in 1954 and raised in Boulder, Colorado, he took up guitar after seeing The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan TV show. That sounds straightforward enough, but listing the styles he uses — folk, protest and free improvisation, feedback noisecore and virtuoso picking, Country & Western and free jazz — comes across so wilfully contradictory, so ludicrously incompatible, that he can seem merely perverse, as if vying for outre cachet. His prolific recorded output is packed with freeform guitar, jokes, satire, snide political comment, noise scares and bizarre chaos — you'll recall Chadbourne was the prankster who released an "ethnological documentation" named *Country Music in The World Of Islam* the year before the Gulf War.

When he played at Benny's Winebar in West London in October, he astonished his audience by whipping out some sheet music and playing scores by Bach and Monk on his banjo, not for comic effect, but immaculately, and then with more edge than any revivalist. It's certainly not quite what you'd expect from the master of free shockrock agit-Metal, the anarcho-improvisor who claims to have invented the electric rake (a contact-miked garden rake scraped on the wall and ceiling, a memorable crowd pleaser). Is all this weirdness simply shock? Time to investigate.

The insect buzz

The problem with Chadbourne's vast output is, where do you begin? It was the way the ensemble music on his recent Leo release, *Insect Attractor*, leapt out of his trademark twangs, buzzes and interference that renewed this listener's enthusiasm for his twerpronged assault on dullful classicism and rock romanticism. Here was someone deploying improvisors to create fantastic music, releasing albums worth recommending. As with many a Chadbourne project, however, scrambled presentation can obscure the finer details of its construction. Distracted by the drawings of insects and the jokes scrawled across the "scores" reproduced on the CD booklet, I mistook the music for

edited improvisations rather than "proper" compositions. Oops.

"I have to ask you why you described *Insect Attractor* as you did [in *The Wire* 176]?" Chadbourne corrects. "You make it sound like it's improvised music that's edited. It's not, it's composed. The material the oboe player plays in 'The Cricket In My Life' is completely notated. There are variations in how it can be played and how it can be combined, it's a thing she works with, but there's a lot of notated material. With 'Mourning Of The Preying Mantis' I liked so many of the solos from various performances I'd taped, that I decided to string a whole lot of them together."

"I've always been a big fan of solos," he continues. "I love hearing groups where somebody 'takes a solo', it's very very nice. One thing that might be lacking in improvised music where everyone's always active is that you don't have solos. So I edited all this material together."

And then found a record label prepared to release these fraudulent, digitally manipulated non-documents?

"Yes!" he replies. "Sometimes you get somebody running a record company, like Leo Feign, who has the insight to realise this is interesting. Somebody else might say, 'I can't release this, there's a difference in the ambience between the recordings you've spliced together.' There's an incredible difference! One moment you're in a huge room, then you're in a tiny place with cars driving by. To me that really appeals, it's like some weird trip. Some people are really analytically retentive. 'What shall we do with this scratchy noise because the amplifier burped?' Well, if you've got somebody that wants to sit on a computer and remove that scratchy noise, feel free, I'm not going to cry because that's not there. But to me, it's there, it's on the tape, who gives a shit? It's not like it doesn't blend in. That's what I like about this area of music: any sound blends in."

But why the bizarre, unprofessional looking scores?

"You have to think about what's the purpose of written music," answers Chadbourne. "It's the way you're communicating with these other musicians. I used to laugh about how looking forward and squinting at the score is an important part of the performance. Anything you write, even if it's not something that someone plays, it affects the communication. Look at these Sade scores with instructions you don't tell the audience, like 'play as if you have a cloud moving through your ear.' These comments are wonderful, they really affect the performance. Sometimes, by making the score look sloppy or silly you get people to relax. It's a kind of trick."

Hobo aesthetics

Manipulative or not, Chadbourne's untidy album covers and interruptive seguing have a scummy, hobo feel — a kind of bagperson obsessiveness. Subaltern protest reflects the very forms he uses. It's hard to see a media bloke like Billy Bragg relating to the rubbish montage of dadaist Kurt Schwitters, with Chadbourne, left critique burns right through the art, singeing all representative systems. He's the guy who performs "I Hate The Man Who Runs This Bar" — detailing the landlord's abuse of the waitress and his wife — in the very bar he's singing about. Chadbourne has a defined aesthetic, but its hostility to high art shenanigans is manifest in every cracked detail.

"Many years ago *Wolpe Voice* compared what I did with these people who put these signs up on lampposts in New York, just filling every inch of it with some writing, some political diatribe, they fill the corners in. They said I was doing that with my recordings, that made me laugh. That became part of my point of view after that. It's fun to create an appearance of it being completely deranged and at the same time having it function very smoothly."

What about playing Bach and Monk from a score? Is that just to annoy improv purists?

"When I got into Bach, I was led into it via Charlie Parker," he explains. "I like practising from the Charlie Parker book of written-out solos. I've been doing that for years. You get these really beautiful melodic lines moving around through different keys, a lot of these really beautiful blues licks too. It got me into sightreading. It's a very enjoyable, relaxing thing, to play music like that. Bach is very similar, you get these long streams of 16th notes, these melodic things moving around, it's beautiful music to play."



"When Jacques Loussier plays Bach on guitar, it's totally smooth. The banjo sounds a little like a harpsichord, so I think it's really suited to the baroque material. As the harmonic thing moves, it gets to a point where the banjo won't get down that low, so you have to go up above, so you get these jumps which are kind of like Eric Dolphy."

It's useful to hear Chadbourne explain himself as, from where he's sitting, his eclectic procedures aren't at all absurd or contradictory. Indeed, the contrary is true: what's really perverse is a commodity culture that slots music into boxes marked entertainment, art or protest. For Chadbourne, great music — from Coltrane to Hendrix to Derek Bailey — is inevitably all three at once. Singing hobo Chadbourne's meat-the-audience presentations certainly have a scurrilous political edge that tends to go missing when improvisation's abstract, art-space pretensions take over. To comment on President Clinton's little problem, for instance, Chadbourne close-miked a fly zipper to create a "nose" event, with expert wrist action bringing the resulting hullaballoo to a musical climax. A Chadbourne gig reconfigures your preconceptions: fun is freed from apologetic banality, avant-garde excrement becomes war on commercial alienation, instrumental virtuosity no longer seems oppressive and mystifying.

The Shockability years

Eugene Chadbourne is a product of the 60s counterculture — Captain Beefheart, marijuana, the Ochs, anti-Vietnam war protests, John Coltrane — who heard Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey and flipped. This is the voice of truth in a world choking on media bullshit! After releasing a couple of punk-free improvisation albums of solo guitar on his own Parachute label (recently reissued on CD), he and John Zorn fused punk and Improv into catering-alike challenges to both audiences — when they had an audience at all. After working on the fringes of free jazz in New York in the early 60s — a frictional, productive period now called No Wave — Chadbourne formed a band called Shockability. Signed to Rough Trade, they had an identity that meant something to rock listeners and even sold some records.

Shockability disintegrated into the usual rock tale of exhausting tours and managerial rip-offs. These experiences mean Chadbourne's criticisms of post-rock and Electronica are not just the grumbings of some art snob who never wanted to play for the great unwashed in the first place. A spell as a journalist interviewing jazz musicians for *Coda* taught him about survival, money matters, copyright. When he explains the advantages of cult status, it's not as if he hasn't considered the alternatives.

Taxing the imagination

"When you tell people you're a musician they wonder why they've never heard of you. I always say it's because I haven't murdered anyone! It's actually liberating to be successful on a small scale where no one has heard of you. If nobody's heard of you, you can't get in trouble for the stuff that you do. *Culturore* is a great example, that record they put out where they're making fun of all these records playing in the background and singing along with them [Culturore's *Tacky Souvenirs Of Pre-Revolutionary America*]. Nobody ever sued them because it was on a really small scale. With a lot of the people in the bigtime music business, the gross is enormous, but the actual amount of money they might put in their pocket is less than someone like me, because there are so many people paid to do things they could do themselves. Like, when I toured with The Violent Femmes, they might have eight people working for them, so they have a lot of leisure time. The main reason that money is spent on these people, though, is because if it was put in an individual's pocket, it would just go on taxes. So you get all these people working for you, and that's better than handing it over to Uncle Sam. The next question is, is there any point in earning that much money if you can't keep it? The only point is that you're employing people." Bela Fleck is the industry's king of banjo — but even he says all his money goes on his tour bus. It's all about prestige.

Going electric

Mega dollar success doesn't guarantee an audience that actually listens to what you're saying. Chadbourne says, "I heard a tape of a Neil Young concert where he was doing a solo tour of the East Coast, an isolated string of dates, it was a very special thing, 40 or 50 bucks to get in. Neil says, 'This is a brand new song I wrote last night,' and the whole audience talked through it because it wasn't something they'd heard before! These are people who'd paid 50 bucks a ticket to see Neil Young, who's one of the most popular rock musicians in the world. Even he doesn't have an audience who is willing to listen to a new song."

Some writers cite Bob Dylan or Miles Davis as proof that the key to combining musical innovation and popular outreach is electricity. I asked Chadbourne what he thought of Davis's turn to amplification with *Braves With*.

"I liked the electric jazz when it first came in," he confesses, "but it got really really fast. There was a dividing line even between one Mahavishnu album and the next. Chick Corea degenerated really quickly. Even some of the Miles Davis stuff with all the electric guitars that people like so much now, at the time we didn't really like it. We were critical of the guitar players and we thought it was nothing compared to Derek Bailey or Hendrix even. We just thought it was cheesy — aggressive and show-offy. I still have problems with somebody like Bela Fleck. Harmonically it's too simple, it never goes in a direction that you don't expect, which was not what I liked about jazz. I liked Herbie Hancock's *Sextet* records, but I didn't like his big funky hit, 'Chameleon', I thought that was awful. I used to make fun of that at the time. We were punsters!"

Even so, Chadbourne doesn't subscribe to free improvisation's insistence on abstraction, its taboo on tunes and entertainment. He befriended keyboard player Steve Beresford after Chicago trumpeter Leo Smith warned him off playing with "that lunatic."

"There was this guy," Chadbourne recalls, "a kind of Derek Bailey figure in Toronto, Larry Dubin, a very wonderful drummer, very similar to Bailey's story. He had been a traditional Dreolund drummer for years, and then he went kind of wild and got into Improv stuff. His wife tried to have him put in a mental institution because he used to sit and play along with her when she was washing dishes — 'I'd rather do this than play in the Dixieland band!' And she was saying, 'How are you going to make a thing?'"

"Larry got leukemia and he didn't want anyone to see him in hospital because he was dying. You could call him on the phone. The last time I spoke to him I was there with John Zorn. We were doing some improvised pieces and some compositions we'd written and we played some standards. I called Larry and he'd gotten some report on the concert, and he said, 'I heard you played some tunes?' Really disgusted, he said [death rattle whisper] 'Don't play tunes!' And as for the C&W stuff, there was a backlash, a pressure not to do it, which was so irritating."

Punchlines not hooklines

Chadbourne's songs are effective vehicles, with rotating points of view that keep surprising the listener. At Benny's Winebar, he answered a request for "Breaking The Law Every Day", what starts out as dope smoker's defiance pans out into satire on TV evangelist sexual hypocrisy and Attorney General corruption, everyone's breaking the law every day, but only the innocent get caught. It's rare to hear political diatribes that pack so much wit, the songs even come with equipped with punchlines. Chadbourne's politics communicate, people get the point I asked him where that came from.

"The idea of having a humorous political song, or something sentimental and very moving that gives people relief — all that I got from seeing Phil Ochs live," he says. "You could say it came from Bob Dylan, but I never saw him perform live. Phil Ochs was more accessible, he actually came and performed in the university ballroom where you could see him very clearly. It had this soothing effect because we were very agitated about the politics back then. You hear these humorous songs — 'Here's To The State Of Richard Nixon' — it really made you laugh. And then there were the moving ones — 'There But For Fortune' — wonderful messages."



The cassette virus

Chadbourne's assault on product impersonality extends to the media he uses for releases. Everyone else is talking digital and Internet; his preference is analogue cassettes. Quite unconsciously, he's mimicking the samizdat culture of pre-89 Eastern Europe and today's Africa (with little copyright enforcement, Western record companies cannot make profits there; singers emerge as stars due to their talents being duplicated so often). Chadbourne is creating a discographical challenge of Sun Ra dimensions.

"I like making cassettes because the music industry can't deal with it," he smirks. "It's very difficult to get a cassette reviewed anywhere, meaning you can amass a whole body of music nobody has ever written about. No one can keep track of what you've actually done. People tell me that I'm upsetting the discographers. When they write me for information, I always send them some misleading things, just to see if I can get it printed and create confusion. I've got this tape series and no one can figure what's been released, no one has written about it. It exists without all the bullshit you get."

Chadbourne's prodigious output might match that of his longtime colleague Zorn, but his strategically careless cassette dissemination of his work couldn't be further removed from the tasteful Avant/Zadik imprints through which Zorn channels his music.

"Zorn and I have a completely different attitude about recordings at this time," Chadbourne explains. "He's trying to get everything that he's ever done, if possible, and everything he'll ever do, under one umbrella that he controls completely in terms of the recording business. He would like to get the rights to everything and have it on Zadik or Avant. What I like is making hundreds and hundreds of recordings for strange little people with their own little labels, so if you're in country A, you can never find the one from country B. You get these people who are feral around looking for things no one has really heard them all. That's really appealing."

Chadbourne vs Jenkins

On his visit to London, Chadbourne played a gig with guitarist Billy Jenkins, who has been described as his Bromley-born equivalent. Like Chadbourne, Jenkins is a guitar virtuoso, who abandoned the prospect of rock success with his group Burlesque for extensive — and painstakingly documented — adventures in modern music. Chadbourne and Jenkins's highspeed duets at the Pigeons pub on Romford Road, East London, were uncannily empathic, each musician instantly responding to the other's song choices, their guitars locking like a post-Sun Ra version of The Hot Club De France. Pop and rock and jazz have created an international culture instantly understood by its practitioners. Even a set by Forest Gate's cult heroes Kenny Process Team failed to overshadow this duel of surrealist master guitarists. The pair were brought together under the banner of free improvisation — characteristically unprecious, Chadbourne compares such gigs to the way Chuck Berry plays with pick-up groups.

"Look at the way Chuck Berry works, or Bo Diddley that inspires me," he asserts. "I like the way that Chuck Berry can go anywhere in the world and they know his music, even now. I think that's a really remarkable accomplishment. When The Rolling Stones made that move about him [Howl! Half Rock, N' Roll], I thought it was weird that anybody so into his music would miss such a central strength of it. The attitude was that his way of playing with pick-up bands was really awful, and that he should have a really tight band of professionals. So they put one together and of course that ruined his music. There's something great about making things spontaneous. The listening audience thinks it's shocking you can operate like that. I did a gig with this drummer Billy Kettle in Scotland last week, we'd never played together before, but everyone thought we must have. I don't know why, it's not so difficult for musicians to get together and sound like they've played together for years. It's not such a remarkable thing. It's something musicians are able to do that you can draw on. It's great! It means they can be combined in really interesting ways."



Musos — heroes or zeros?

Just because musical skill is frequently shrouded in an aura of boring anti-experimental sanctity does not mean cack-handedness or knock-bushing is necessarily superior. Chadbourne, for one, thinks being a musician is cool.

"There was a drummer I used to work with who quit playing because he said he didn't like the fact that musicians think they're cool," jokes Chadbourne in disbelief. "One night, he realised as he approached the stage at the Knitting Factory that everyone was watching him and thinking he was cool as he was the drummer in my band. I thought, 'Well, musicians are cool.' It's nice that people look up to you. You always read this stuff about how in African society, the musician is considered one of the most wonderful people in the village. Well, why not? People like musicians. It does make you cool. I think he's got it all wrong. He's finally doing something that makes him cool and he doesn't want to do it any more. If people look up to you for playing music, it's great, it's better than looking up to you because you've beaten everyone up in town!"

As a frontline veteran versed in punk, lo-fi and free jazz, Chadbourne's words about some of the newer acts in rock are astute:

"People say to me that it must be easier for me now that we've got this 'post-rock' and 'Electronica,' he reflects. "A lot of this is very young people with not much musical ability creating stuff that sounds kind of weird — and to their friends it seems really, really weird — but eventually they hear other stuff and they think, 'Well, it's not really that weird.' Some of these people might become dedicated to making truly weird music, but they're not really that dedicated yet, it's an initial stage. I hear that, so it's hard for me to listen to it. I know the really weird stuff I get in the position most with my own kids. I don't want to discourage them, anything they want to listen to, I think it's great. I try not to be cantankerous about it. When my daughter Jenny started getting into Phish, I'm saying, 'Well, listen to these Miles Davis records because that's

what they're doing and this is much better"

"One confrontation we had, and I tried to keep it friendly, was about Medeski, Martin & Wood because she really liked them. I thought this is like the Ramsey Lewis of its day — wimpy piano stuff made to appeal on a lower common denominator. And you get these guys making these comments about how that's better because it 'communicates' easier, and jazz which is too far out is inferior — that really irritates me."

The reason Chadbourne can flummox discographers with his myriad cassette releases is because he holds to the ethic of creative jazz and improvisation. Each night must be fresh, spontaneous, special. Whereas the rock format hems groups behind their monitors, blissfully ignorant of the sound actually reaching the crowd and often unable to react spontaneously to their audience because every move in their set is rehearsed, Chadbourne's intimate — though frequently noisy — approach is predicated on him hearing what we hear.

"People from the pop and rock field, even some of these bands I've collaborated with, they can't understand how I can conceive of making the records as quickly as I can. But if you come from the jazz point of view, a good jazz or improvising group might go on the road and every night you could record it and every night you could possibly have something that's worth releasing."

Mama's boys

Chadbourne credits his work ethic to his mother, a surprising comment until you remember rock 'n' roll was launched by a singer and guitarist devoted to his mama (and relaunched by another mama's boy, this time with spiky hair). Mother's boy Eugene says "My mother was German and very practical. One thing I learned from her was that it's not that difficult to sustain yourself in this society, to work and earn money. She taught me the work ethic, which I think is really important. People can achieve things by working hard, there's no point in just sitting around whining about how you should have this and that handed to you. There's a lot of that in the music business. Whenever you are, there's somebody you know back when you were both with dirty underwear, and now this guy is a genius star and he should be handing you the world because he's an old friend. There's a lot of time wasted on this envy — stupid thinking. There's a lot you can achieve by controlling everything and not getting sucked into the ways the commodity system preys on creative people — like 'You need the latest equipment to impress people'."

Rust never sleeps

If this interview has concentrated on Chadbourne's *modus operandi* rather than his musical technique, that's because his guy (Leon McAuliffe meets Fred 'Sonny' Smith meets Derek Bailey) and bargo (traditional bluegrass meets claihammer) are best experienced on one of his innumerable LPs, CDs or cassettes. In person, Chadbourne is affable and amusing, but not to the point of hiding what he actually thinks. He has moments of sternness characteristic of bondleaders — people who know how to be decisive. Endowed with a terrific talent (he can enter a room anywhere in the world and make people pay attention to his playing, laugh and applaud), he's resolved to keep rubbing it up against people who appreciate it best, who can talk back to him. His way is not Dewo or The KLF taking on the hypocrites of the mass media in their own brash, soulless, alienated language. His method is to let his extraordinary productions leak out into the world, leaving them to imitate a different way of doing things. Unlike the strident statements rap and rock groups aim at the charts, Chadbourne's productive largesse — the tide of small-label releases, his own self-bootlegging cassette guerrilla warfare, his openness to collaboration and sheer accident — suggests that maximising profits is not the only strategy. The iron law of commerce as an end in itself starts to show specs of rust.

As the structures of capitalism teeter towards recession and bankruptcy — including a dinosaur music industry geared towards the manufacture of celebrity faces and anonymous beats — Chadbourne's DIY ethic looks more and more realistic. Politics or no politics, Eugene Chadbourne's avant garde hobnobism is proof that the emancipation of the working musician will always need to be enacted by the musicians themselves. *— Insect Attractor is out now on Leo Records*

Seven Chadbourne Pearls



Eugene Chadbourne *Volume Two: Solo Acoustic Guitar* (Parachute CD/LP 1976)

A bearded Eugene plays solo guitar. "Chadbourne," runs a note, "uses cheap, battered Harmony guitars from pawnshops exclusively, but stay tuned for further developments." In the midst of this improvising punism, he manages to do a version of "Rocket" by jazz alto saxophonist Oliver Lake.

Eugene Chadbourne & Jimmy Carl Black *Pacheco Cadaver* (Fire Art CD 1995)

Chadbourne interprets the Beethoven songbook in partnership with Jimmy Carl Black, drummer for The Mothers Of Invention. Scratchy freeform versions impart an intense hilarily lycosim. "The Dust Blows Forward And The Dust Blows Back" is a masterpiece. For their wonderful rendering of "The Blimp" (a notorious studio 'event' from *Trout Mask Replica*), however, look for the duo's *Locked In A Dutch Coffeeshop* (Fundamental Recording Company CD, undated).

Eugene Chadbourne *The Acqueduct* (Rectangle LP 1997)

Notable for the sterling Country tracks Chadbourne cut with Nashville session musicians, but even their pedigree couldn't get him an overground release. Also, covers of Ornette Coleman's "Peace Warners", Herbie Nichols' "The Gig" and John Coltrane's "Way Too Blue."

Eugene Chadbourne & Derek Bailey *Tout For Teal* (Rectangle 10" LP 1997)

An encounter with free improvisation's most exacting ideologist. Did Bailey make Chadbourne play long? Chadbourne "Derek was making sure I was going to do some songs, right from the beginning he was saying, 'Are you going to sing?' He wanted me to do it so he could have a fun time fucking around with it."

Eugene Chadbourne/Various Artists *Boogie With The Hook* (Leo CD 1995)

Duets with Bailey, Amsterdam drummer Han Bennink, jazz bantoinist Charles Tyler, baroque supreme Volmar Venken, and a 1980 duet with John Zorn. Sound quality is hi-fi to hi-fi and everything in between, the programming delightful.

Eugene Chadbourne *Insect Attractor: Insect & Western Compositions For Ensemble* (Leo CD 1998)

DAT technology enables improvising guerrillas to sound as good as corporate mercenaries. However, this release marks Chadbourne's emergence as a composer as well as instrumentalist. Check the flute solo from *ex-Mother Of Invention* Bunk Gardner, classically trained Carme Shul's beautiful oboe, Alex Ward's keening soprano and a host of others.

Eugene Chadbourne *The Helixingtones* (Intakt CD 1998)

Chadbourne's cut-ups of Duke Ellington charts interpreted by a group including the aforementioned Shul and Ward, bassoonist Leslie Ross, keyboardist/Junglist Pat Thomas and Improv legend Paul Lovens on drums. Intakt insist on squeaky clean production, letting hi-fi squares appreciate some superb musicianship...



Amid the Anglo-Asian cultural flirtations of the 1960s, an Indian violinist and a black British free jazz player carried out the world's first successful Indo-Jazz fusion. Violinist **John Mayer** recalls some historic encounters. Words: Rob Young. Photography: Maria Ramstrom

tipping the scales

"I was brought up in a very poor family, and quite frankly I used music to get out of the slums. I don't have any high fakiri ideas. All this business of inspiration, and all that..." John Mayer makes a springing gesture. "When I'm hungry, I play. It's as simple as that. I was what they call a gunfighter — have fiddle, will travel."

At many times during a long career, John Mayer has had to come up with creative solutions to crises and conflicts endemic to an artist exploring virgin territory. Born in 1930 in Calcutta, he came of age in that fertile, turbulent post-war period when Asian and Western musics first seriously clashed, then intermixed and finally found harmony. Under the influence of The Beatles and Ravi Shankar, Anglo-Indian cultural exchange carried over to swinging London in the mid-60s. Mayer, who had already been resident in Britain for 15 years, was running his Indian chamber group when he found himself in a studio with the visionary British jazz quintet led by saxophonist Joe Harriott. What eventually emerged from their encounter was the first significant fruit of the faltering exchanges going on between England and India since the war. The music not only crossed cultural barriers, it also achieved a genuine fusion of jazz and Indian classical music, of raga and hard bop. The significance of the groundbreaking Indo-Jazz Fusions records Mayer and Harriott recorded in 1967-68 hasn't diminished in the intervening years. Indeed, now that they're finally being reissued, coinciding with a new era of Asian-led multicultural cross-pollination, it's finally possible to take a true measure of their impact.

Born the son of a Calcutta dockworker, Mayer was destined to grow up a nobody. His family was poor, and he got his first violin from his aunt who had cadged it off the English colonial family she cleaned for. His first, enthusiastic sawings were noticed by his father, who called him a "cossy" for indulging such an unmanly pastime. Luckily, his mother managed to persuade the French violinist Philippe Sandre to give her son secret violin lessons during his lunch breaks. "He taught me until I was 13 or 14, until I could play Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso," recalls Mayer, perched on the piano

stool in his North London home. "Then he announced to the school, 'This is Johnny Mayer — I've been teaching him for free!' Then they accepted me." A prodigy, Mayer already wanted to become a composer by the time he entered Bombay's most prestigious music competition, encouraged by another Indian violinist, Melhi Mehta (father of the conductor Zubin). "He said, 'Look, John, you'll never get out of this country with composition — they won't accept you. You are a damn fine fiddle player, use your violin and get out. Once you are in England, put your violin down and say, 'I'm a composer.' The day I went to do this concert, I had been sleeping on a roof the



night before, and there was a tear in my shirt, and no buttons on it. But I played the Brahms fiddle concerto and I won it." His prize was a paid trip to London, and a violin course at the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied under the exiled Hungarian composer Matyas Seiber. But Mayer's funding ran out a year after he arrived. Putting his composer ambitions on hold, he took up a series of orchestral posts, first with The London Philharmonic and then The Royal Philharmonic. In the time between his arrival in Britain in 1952 and the day he quit the orchestra in 1965, Mayer got to absorb all he needed to know about Western classical traditions.

The fateful Harriott-Mayer meeting came at the end of a long sequence of events which, with hindsight, looked like stepping stones leading straight to it. In the mid-60s, Mayer had managed to get one of his compositions — the brief *Raga Music* for solo clarinet — recorded and used as a TV education theme tune. In the process he was introduced to the powerful EMI producer Denis Preston. In the hope Preston would be able to broker more work for him in the "East meets West" style he was dabbling with, Mayer pestered Preston's office for months, but with no response. He was on the verge of abandoning his attempt at becoming a jobbing composer when a letter arrived. "Dear Mr Mayer, Mr Preston would like to see you in his office..." Mayer recalls. "I went to see him, and he said, 'We're doing this prestige record for the Shakespeare centenary, and we're short of two and a half minutes of music. Most of our composers are busy now. Do you have a piece of music we could use?' I said, 'Of

course I have." He said, "It's for three flutes, trombone, two trumpets and percussion. Bring it in tomorrow — we're recording at 6:30." I sat up all night and wrote a piece called *Nine For Bacon*." Arriving the next day at the studio, Mayer met the session musicians. "There was Don Lusher, Kenny Baker, all these big jazz players." Preston vanished with the tapes to America for a couple of months, but on his return he brought good news. "[Atlantic Records president] Ahmet Ertegün liked your piece!" Mayer recalls Preston saying. "Also, they had this idea of bringing a fusion of the Indian and the Western together."

Preston had it all planned out: he would pair Mayer's Indian quartet with Harriott's group, plus a flautist striding amidst them. Harriott was already a vanguard figure in British jazz, and his pioneering albums such as *Free Form, Movement and Abstract* are held to be lost tablets of free music, carved in spooky tandem at the beginning of the 1960s with the better documented advances of Ornette Coleman. For Harriott, it would be simultaneously a progression and an abandonment of the giant steps he'd been taking towards freedom. The way Mayer tells it, Harriott was aware of the importance of getting his head around Eastern methods, but the sessions that were eventually released as *Indo-Jazz Fusions* were hard toil.

"We had two days in the studio," Mayer says. "We started at ten in the morning, and at half past, Joe said 'What the hell is going on?' I can't play with all this bloody noise." I said, "Look, Joe, this is an instrument you have never known — a star!" I gave him a lecture. "The star has seven main strings, and 13 sympathetic strings, which are tuned to the notes of the raga." Things became easier after that first session trumpeter Shake Keane was replaced by Kenny Wheeler, and Jackie Douglas took over the drum stool from Alan Ganley. But Mayer seemed to be in the driving seat. "I had the best," he says, "he was a tremendous player, Joe. He was quick to get these things. His technique was superb, he was far ahead of his time. Kenny Wheeler was a wonderful player — so beautiful. And [pianist] Pat Smythe used to grasp the raga immediately." The next two albums released by the Double Quartet had — in name at any rate — moved on from the classical staidness of the Suite, and suggested that more of a heat-exchange had taken place: they were titled *Indo-Jazz Fusions I and II*.

At what stage did the word "fusion" sneak into musical currency? Certainly, *Indo-Jazz Fusions I* and *II* were among the first records to appropriate a word that, by the following decade, had become a generic tag. "The Grove Dictionary of Jazz" claims that fusion was coined by Denis Preston," comments Mayer, "but the man who coined the word was Don Norman, our road manager." Whatever, Suite, and then the two *Fusions* records, were heavily discussed artifacts on the jazz scene, according to Mayer, the first sold better in the first weeks of its release than Ravi Shankar's 1965 *Portrait Of Genius*, the jazz-inflected album he made with flautist Paul Horn. Mayer seems pleased by his music's favourable performance, compared to Shankar's sales. A Roman Catholic, he jokes "Sheer luck. Maybe the 'Our Father' is stronger than the mantra."

Talk of fusing East and West was already in the air back in India itself at the time Mayer was growing up. He played drums in a jazz group for a short time, and his first music teacher, Sanathan Mukerjee, promoted the communion of Eastern and Western sounds. "He said, 'If you ever want to make a fusion of these two techniques — which I know you want to one day — your knowledge of Western music must be the same as your knowledge of Indian music, or even more.' Even as a little boy, I knew that Indian music is a scalar technique, a linear technique. And I'd heard Schoenberg, and I knew that twelve-tone was a scalar technique as well. At that young age, 13 or 14, I thought, there must be a way of putting these two things together. The only difference is, one is tonal, the other is atonal. But the ascending and descending structure of the Indian raga, the arohana and the avarohana, is similar in a way to the strictness of serial technique, where you cannot repeat a note."

Mayer injected a classical rigour into the process of integration. The most haunting track on *Fusions II* is the heavily apocryphalised "Song Before Sunrise." Mayer's explanation of those inverted commas gave an insight into how deep the fusion bit ran to the track. He needs a few moments to recall its origins, reaches for the original manuscript off his shelves, then plays a few bars on his piano. "The sunrise in India is something wonderful," he rhapsodises, "and I used a raga [called] which is a morning sunrise raga. It has no dominant. And the dominant, in any scale, always gives a feeling of future. But because this has no dominant, there is a feeling of uncertainty. So therefore the 'song before sunrise' is neither right, nor is it day. So you're singing about something when you don't know what's going to happen. I'm a philosopher, the sun might not rise, you know? Which means, you are dead, you won't be here to see it."

The Indo-Jazz Fusions group was successful — they toured the UK and larger international festivals, and ended up with a series of TV specials, where they played with invited guests, including The Nice and The Moody Blues. But their first incarnation came to an end with Harriott's untimely death from cancer in 1973 (the saxophonist had also suffered from recurring tuberculosis). "He used to smoke and drink like hell," says Mayer. "He'd say, 'Come on Johnny, let's go and get the taste.' They say he



overdosed... well, what made him do it? You drink to forget, don't you? I couldn't understand why other people were working, and this poor guy wasn't getting the work that was due to him in the jazz field. He was a great player. Sitting in his flat by himself, he must have got up [early] morning, looked at the sheet, and nothing to do."

For a long while after, Mayer fell back on composition — he is now composer in residence at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and has sat on the Arts Council. An abortive attempt to revive the Indo-Jazz project with new personnel, including saxophonist Steve Williamson, didn't last — because, Mayer believes, Williamson felt too much in the shadow of Harriott's genius. In the last few years, however, a third format has taken shape, again comprising ten players, among them the composer's son Jonathan on star. This new incarnation has played concert halls in India and Bangladesh, as well as releasing two CDs for the Nimbus label. Although Nimbus's unorthodox recording methods, designed for orchestral expansiveness, are utterly unsuited to capturing the intimacy of the ensemble.

Asian Arts and the new *Ragatals* pick up on the original group's seelateeb freshness.

"I find the younger players know more," explains Mayer of his new team. "The world has progressed in 35 years. Take my son Jonathan apart from being a star player, he's a damn fine composer. And he doesn't only know Indian music, he knows Western music. I hate all forms of musical apartheid. The young people's knowledge is of a higher plane. Indian classical musicians? It's all, 'Can't spoil my gharana [school], can't taint my culture, and all that rubbish. You can't say these things.'"

Mayer's orchestral, chamber and instrumental compositions — *Sriwastotsava*, *The Flames Of Lanka*, *Prabandha* — incorporate Hindu mythology within a European classical framework. Inevitably, they don't sound as exotic now as Ravi Shankar's *Concertos For Sitar And Orchestra* must have done in the late 60s. But when you meet Mayer, you become aware that today's open ground wasn't won without a fight. "If you are challenging a man to a duel, make sure you know what arms he's using, because if you take a sword and he has a gun, he'll blow your head off," he says, laughing at the memory of his determination to outpace the musical experts from both East and West. The long years since the Harriott era have tempered him — a little. "Philosophy for me is a very important subject. It makes people less belligerent. The great philosopher never uses the word 'I', it's always 'one'. The whole world is part of logic — if you look at microbes through a microscope, they look completely disordered. But there's order in there. I just quarantined it." *Indo-Jazz Fusions I & II* is reissued on Nimbus. *Ragatals* released this month on Nimbus.

EVANGELINE

a windblown travel with allegorical
ghosts, a taste of desolate elegance...

Loren MazzaCane Connors

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400, 340, 440 | poetry by Suzanne Langille

arc of a jet plane

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Q Quartet Books

BASQUIAT
A QUICK KILLING IN ART

PHOEBE HOBAN

charts

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Rough Trade 15

To Rococo Rot + D Tird (Soul Static Sound)
Randall Smith L'Dreile Volt (Imeda)
Derek Bailey Playbacks (Bingo)
Squarepusher Music Is Rotted One Note (Warp)
Ziegler & Schultze Die Furhtu Dengelophone 7" (Dhyana)
François Bayle Motion-Ersonen (INA/GRM)
Plastikman Antitaks (NovaMute)
Chicago Underground Duo 12" Of Freedom (Thrill Jockey)
Chris Watson Outside The Circle Of Fire (Touch)
Lithops Tubino 7" (Static Caravan)
Underground Resistance Interstellar Fugitives (UR)
Fridge + D Indeguse (Soul Static Sound)
Christian Zanesi Arthelon (INA/GRM)
Roy Budd Get Carter OST (Castle)
Arwane ID (Din)
Compiled by D. Rough Trade, Covent Garden, London WC1

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Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso
 UFO (PSF)
Add N To (X) Little Black Rocks In The Sun (Mute)
Amon Düül II Yes! (Captain Trip)
Blue Cheer Vincebus Eruptum (Mercury)
Coil Autumnal Equinox: Amethyst Deceiver 7" (Eskaton)
Epikurs Burflore Side A Side B (Smalltown Supersound)
Farmers Manual Explorers_We (OR)
Arne Nordheim Electric (Rune Grammofon)
Nurse With Wound Second Pirate Session (United Dairies)
Palace Music Gesundheit And Other Songs (bootleg)
Arvid Sletta Statement (Slettas Overtakers)
Senik Youth Silver Session For Jason Knuth (SKR)
Sophia The Infinite Circle (Flower Shop)
Tarwater Slur (Kitty-Yo)
This Heat Health And Efficiency/Repeat (These)
Compiled by Dr C-Scare and Martin Art, Subliminal Sounds, So What Club, Oslo, Norway

The Office Ambiance

Tarwater Slur (Kitty-Yo)
David Sylvian Dead Bees On A Cake (Virgin)
Terre Thaemlitz Love For Sale — Taking Stock In Our Pride (Mile Plateaux)
David S Ware Go See The World (Columbia)
Hell Hunch Machine (Delco B/V2)
Chicago Underground Duo 12" Of Freedom (Thrill Jockey)
Vittorio Gelmetti Musiche Elettroniche (Neples)
Various Drtones, Spoon Harps & Bellophones (Ellipsis Arts)
Dumb Type [DR] (Foil)
Zeena Parkins No Way Back (Atavistic)
Teiji Ito King Ubu (Tzadik)
Exhaust Exhaust (Constellation)
DAF Die Kleinen Und Die Bösen (Mute)
Tanzmusik Tanzmusik (Sublime)
Alice Coltrane A Monastic Trio (Impulse)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

WFMU 15

Free Design Kites Are Fun: Best Of (Varese Sarabande)
Teiji Ito King Ubu (Tzadik)
Various The Bag Itch Volume 6 (M' Mancini)
Tied & Ticked Trio Tied & Ticked Trio (Bingo)
Purmon Render Bandits (Mile Plateaux)
Pole CD1 (Kliff SM)
Various Music Of The Earth: Astonishing And Rare Instruments (Unesco)
African Head Charge Drastic Season (On-U Sound)
Annea Lockwood & Ruth Anderson Sinopah (Experimental Intermedia)
Various Tribute To The Spacemen 3 (Rocket Girl)
Vartina Vihma (Wicklow)
Stars Of The Lid & John McCafferty
Per Aspera Ad Astra (Kranky)
Hacié Toporewicz Tokyo Loops (Hacié Toporewicz)
Arthur Doyle Plus 4 Plays Alabama Feeling (DRA Productions)
John French D. Solo Drumbo (Awant)
Compiled by Brian Turner, WFMU Radio, Jersey City, New York, USA. Netcast at: www.wfmur.org

Intetaka 15

Alan Lorber Orchestra The Lotus Palace (Verve)
Moondog Moondog (Prestige)
Soliman Gamil Arkh (Touch)
Manos Hadjilakidis Gekonda's Smile (EPH)
Les Baxter & His Orchestra The Soul Of The Drums (Rhaps)
Sun Ra Sun Song (Delmark)
Karla Pandit Music Of The Exotic East (Fantasy)
Iden Ahbez Eder's Island (Del-Fi)
Charles Ives The Unanswered Question (CBS)
The Beach Boys Smiley Smile (Capitol)
King Tubby & Friends Dub Gone Crazy (Blood & Fire)
Various Easy Tempo Volume 2: The Psycho Beat (Easy Tempo)
Hector Villa Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras No 5 (EPH)
Duke Ellington The Queen's Suite (Pablo)
Orchestra Baobab Prater's Choice (World Circuit)
Compiled by DJ Lo-Fi, Intetaka Bar, Athens, Greece



Moondog

sound check

On form: November's selected albums and 12" s

Air Traffic Controllers

Assistant To The Assistant

PAKELLE/SPIN RECORDS CD

Best known as the co-president of Matador Records, Gerard Cosloy is pretty defenseless about his improv project with drummer Gare Pannell. *Air Traffic Controllers*, jarring album and track titles seem like protective layers of irony, while their *Website* is so dense you can barely tell what's a joke and what isn't.

He shouldn't worry: he's a terrific guitarist, an adept of effects devices whose speciality is grabbing his best phrases as they fly, looping them and using them as the basis for his next wave of noise. You can hear his love of underground rock expressed directly in his live playing. There are suggestions of The Dead C in his freer-than-free tone. *Protophonics* and Tom Cora in his loop and solo figureground process, and maybe even Martin Swope's tape loops for *Hudson Of Burma* in the way he'll truncate a phrase of rhythm and let it build up tension as it cycles.

Pannell, meanwhile, is way over on the other end of the skill spectrum — she's got the kind of natural response that will be harnessed if she ever learns to play live. Fortunately, it sounds like she has no interest in timekeeping. Her irregular battery is an ideal complement to Cosloy's precise cycles and raw slashes. Most of the time she's following his lead, but for the first few minutes of "Becardobane" she tops out an imperfectly repeating cluster over an insistent trill of electronics until he comes in with a long, caustic scree.

The four long tracks on this third album mostly take a while to build up momentum, but when Cosloy and Pannell get it right, as on "External," they're sensationally intense.

DOUGLAS WOLK

Gerl Allen

The Gathering

VERVE 553614 CD

Pianist Gerl Allen made her name playing with drummer Ray Mobley and bassist Charlie Haden. The two 60s avant-garde veterans accompanied her on absorbing recordings that reaped the legacy of Bill Evans and Paul Bley. She played Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," demonstrating that the piano's tempered system need not deny a musician the delights of key-free harmonics. Since then, she has pursued a contrist course between the baroque mainstream and outcast creativity, maintaining an idiosyncratic alert that keeps her music intriguing. The



Lord of the new church: Chris Carter reviewed page 64

photography for the new release is just dreamy photographs of Allen in a beautiful sequined dress, her expression is engaged and intelligent. Something challenging lurks within these beguiling sounds.

The producer is Ted Mazero, associate of Brothers Brew era Miles Davis. Percussionist Mino Cinelu is also on hand. Piano trio purism has been abandoned. However, as with the first Weather Report album, haunting effects are achieved by innovative arrangements and unorthodox mic technique rather than by

plugging in the latest gear. This isn't just the sound of jacks warming their skills in a pop studio. Fusion drums supreme Lenny White plays electrified rock drums, all boom and shimmer. Allen leans to him gradually, floating knife-edge decisions over his pummeling with noticeable grace. Allen's horn charts are impressionist masterpieces out of Gil Evans and Hermeto Pascoal. "Ray" drifts dangerously near the West Coast major chord saccharine that makes much smooth jazz resemble introductions to a Linda Ronstadt

An A-Z of reviews:

Air Traffic Controllers Gerl Allen

Charles Amirkhanian Erik B &

Rakim **Derek Bailey** The Beach

Boys **Tim Berne & Michael**

Formanek **Peter Blegvad** **Rob**

Brown-Lou Grassi Quartet **Chris**

Bum's Ensemble **Chris Carter**

Cobra Killer **ColourSound** **Rav**

Coltrane **Combustible Edison** **CTI**

Miles Davis **Dominic Duval** with

The CT String Quartet **EAR**

Exhaust **Michael Finnissy** **Michael**

Formanek **Global Electronic**

Network **Peter Hammill** **HEAD**

Teiji Ito **Lech Janowski** **Peter**

Jeffries **Leroy Jenkins** **Kerosene**

Khan & Walker **Chris Knox**

Robert M Lepage & Martin

Tetraudt **René Luxard** & Martin

Réneault **William Parker** **Ivo**

Perelman with The CT String

Quartet **Plastikman** **Project Dark**

Eliane Radigue **Sam Rivers** &

Tony Hymas **Steve Roden** **Ryuch**

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Strange brewer: Miles Davis



Miles Davis

The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions
COLUMBIA LEGACY ACB655 570 4XCD

So what have we here? A new, enhanced version of the fusion-spawning classic, or another cynical marketing ploy? The answer is, a little of each. The site, first of all, is something of a monomer. We are not given the complete sessions from 19-21 August 1969 which produced the six canonic pieces from the original double LP — after all, these were spliced together by Miles Davis and producer Teo Macero from various studio jams and fragmented takes. A "complete" issue would include the material in its pre-edited condition, as well as all of the unused portions. But honestly, would we want to hear all of these bits and pieces? Would it be enlightening to see where the scraps of paper in a Schwitters collage originally came from, or is the truly important part what he ultimately did with them? That's an argument for scholars and fanatics.

So what are we given on the first one and a half discs of the four disc compilation are the as-previously-issued compositions of "Pharaoh's Dance," "Bitches Brew," "Spanish Key," "John McLaughlin," "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down" and "Sanctuary" — digitally remixed and remastered from their previous CD release. No miracles with the new sound, but it is cleaned and beaked up to a noticeable degree, the better to hear the crucial interplay of minor voices in

the electrified ensemble's flux and fury. Benny Maupin's brooding bass connotes his new bits, Jack DeJohnette's cymbals sizzle; the small percussion instruments now have an identity; there's better distinction between the figure of Joe Zawinul's and Chick Corea's keyboards, and bassists Dave Holland and Harvey Brooks emerge from what was once a primordial sludge into the light of day. And as a result, no matter how many times you've heard it, the music blossoms once again and re-establishes its revolutionary position. Critics have claimed that Davis began to shape-shift on *Filles De Kimono* and in *A Silent Way*, turning from jazz master into a psychedelic chameleon seduced by acid rock, funk (Sly Stone and James Brown), and the contemporary classical otherworld timbres of Penderecki and Ligeti. True enough, but those tentative first steps sound like a genteel garden party compared to these six volcanic eruptions. Call it whatever you like: a churning cauldron of voodoo stew, post-Stockhausen electrofunk, an apocalyptic farfare for the Death of Jazz. The truth is that Davis and company were alchemists during those three days in the studio, using spontaneous musical mass hysteria and post-production tape-slicing wizardry to create gold.

The remaining stuff in this box is neither golden nor *Bitches Brew*, exactly. The subsequent sessions from November 1969, January and February 1970 altered the personnel significantly and the bottom dropped out. Gone are the polyphonic madness and mystical mood, stark notwithstanding. Some of this music — the mesmerizing "Great Expectations" and "Guenivere," vests to soft rock innocence — appeared only years later, and for good reason. The problem with long jamming-in-the-studio takes is that when inspiration flags, the music — without the benefit of *Bitches Brew* style editing and reconstruction — is simply tedious (the exception is "Lonely Fire," which is mesmerizing because of the boldness and vulnerability of its stark, exposed, raw nerve simplicity). The vaulted nine new pieces are fragments and studio jams that were weedy squashed in the first place.

During these exploratory days, Davis seems to be tuning up on atmosphere instead of rhythmic urgency (without Billy Cobham's inchoate fusion drumming, the music wouldn't have a spine). The areas of freedom which the musicians were allowed are audible in sections of "Little Blue Frog" and Zawinul's "Silent Way,"

but the pauses and dead spots that drift in and out of the luxurious harmonies reveal that the magic is missing. Occasional grooves quickly dissolve, as if a sketch for a larger design which Davis had yet to visualize. (After a pretty but undeveloped two minute fragment, the wryly titled "Take It Or Leave It," Davis is heard to say, "I want to use that somewhere, Ted") The halfheartedness — and ultimate pessimism, deslashing those elements of free jazz which gave *Bitches Brew* its edge — or Davis's studio constructivist attitude is everywhere apparent. Even those brief moments of excitement — a taste of John McLaughlin's Heavy Metal guitar (otherwise reined in — what happened to Davis's supposed Hendrix influence?) in "Double Image," or the sandpaper friction of traded solos in the otherwise static "Feed" — simply stop, conatus interruptus in favour of artificial reorientation, energy on the loose with no direction home.

Why include these he-and-miss moments which have no real connection to the *Bitches Brew* sessions? Or, for that matter, why stop here? Drawing a line in mid-February 1970 is an arbitrary production decision to say the least. Why not pump up the packaging even more with the rest of Davis's studio sessions from 1970 alone: "Durant," "Kondo" and "Wille Nelson" (issued on the LP *Directions*); "Go Ahead John" (from *Big Fun*), "Honky Tonk" (from *Get Up With It*) and the acclaimed *Jack Johnson*? Why not try and finally make some real sense out of this period — material which has been miserably doled out in the previous cut and paste LP collections? Are there more unreleased outtakes and fragments from these sessions? Let's have them! It's marketing motivated repackaging (as opposed to thoughtful collections which comment upon and enhance our understanding of the music and its context) is going to err; why not let it err on the side of extravagance and inclusion, and the devil take the rest? Four CDs or six — what's the difference? We've paid before, we'll pay again.

The truth is, Columbia hasn't known what to do with this morass of material since day one, and still hasn't found the best setting for its release. The *Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* succeeds only by half — the first half, *Bitches Brew* itself. You've heard it. It's brilliant. As for what came after, we still don't have the big picture. If I were *Older*, I'd smell a conspiracy.

ART LANGE

song. Vernon Reid's guitar part — Latino acoustic, dove mixed and hard plucked — is a cliché, but it's played with enough risk and brioletiness to convince.

The Gathering is altogether an oddity. It rearranges commercial-sounding blendments with speculative intelligence. The only record sounding remotely like it is Frank Zappa's *Sheep Dog*, which placed arena rock guitar heroics alongside cocktail lounge double bass. Things are less harmonically innovative here, but just as it

threatens to degenerate into Jazz FM fodder, Allen modulates the harmony or comes up with a fascinating atonal run. On "Gubner's Royal Blue Red's" trombonist Robin Eubanks solos over a Davis-like rock beat with heart-pounding confessional intimacy. "Angels" uses ethereal harmonies that recall Scott MacLennan, seven-year-old Lela's wordless scat evokes the nursery surrealism of Robert Wyatt's singing, and Buster Williams's bowed bass takes up her wistfully intimate, to create a highly charged atmosphere. "Light House"

has authentic jazz moments as piano, bass and drums pursue parallel lines, falling in or weaving each other, creating a mix of searing intelligence and sonorous power rarely

achieved in other genres. "Joy And Wonder" points the way to a true assessment of Miles Davis's electric music: the real ingredient was not amplification, but hanging out-of-tempo harmonies over a shuffle. Allen's chamber fusion fuses together unlikely strands in jazz and rearranges our idea of its history.

SEN WATSON

Charles Amirkhanian

Wallong/Tune
SHAWNEE 57156 CD

Think of a cross between Pierre Henry, Lewis Carroll and the World Service and you have some idea of the electroacoustic work of American based composer Charles Amirkhanian. It's highly difficult to place his art — classical composition? David Shea-like sample-based? Surrealist dreamscape? Laurie Anderson's slevazilla describes him simply

as an anthropologist. Gold And Spirt—for instance, is a weird take on the Olympics which overlays American's voice to form crowd chants using artists names—"Go Vorn Gogh!"—accompanied by the sounds of an unidentified hot sport. Neither overly montaged, nor sound sculptures, most of these pieces have a referential aspect. The 49 second Chu Lu Lu exemplifies cultural confusion between France and America by overlaying music from Cajun and Native America and former French colonies.

Idealistic associations often lead to bizarre scene assemblies. Verr (Los Angeles) a tribute to Nicolas Slonimsky, who conducted the first performance of Varèse's *L'ionisation*, starts with snars as a reference point, and a German music box dating back to Slonimsky's youth. Later there's a dialogue between a cuckoo clock, a Korean stringed komungo and a sampled cat. The pieces play havoc with categories, mixing the representational and the musical, a sound played on an instrument blends imperceptibly into a sampled environment, while animal sounds turn out to be mechanically produced.

It sounds like an aesthetics of nature, but somehow American manages to warp his materials in such a way that they blend into impossible artificial spaces, veering between the graceful and the freakish. At one point in *Walking Tune*, an extended homage to Percy Grainger, he juggles the Donald Duck vocalizations of Elizabeth Baker, sampled bird sounds and what sounds like squeaked rubber toys (ducks?) all of which get slowed down or speeded up. Playful, complex and enigmatic, this is music that reminds you there are still novel ways to break with convention.

HATT FETTER

Derek Bailey

Playbacks
BNCZ BNCZ4 CD

With the release of *Guitar: Drums & Bass* two years ago, Derek Bailey upset the basic protocols of free improvisation. Having all but invented it, Bailey seemed to be ignoring the dichotomies on which free music rested: the assertion of freedom against determinism and its corollary, the priority of the live event over the recorded product. But Bailey's first foray into the land of programmed beats equally transgressed the conventions of drum 'n' bass which might permit jazzy lifts, but hardly the sort of sustained and relentless improvisation that is Bailey's trade.

But to anyone who has kept track of his career or paid heed to his own accounts of it, Bailey's defiance of genre was perfectly in character. For four decades, the now 68-year-old guitarist has pursued free improvisation as an ethical project, a practice of perpetual self-transmission through a profound openness to the Other. He has continually sought out new players and contexts for this practice over the years, amassing an astonishing

number and variety of duos for his one-on-one engagements.

Inspired by Guter, *Drums & Bass*, U. Bassist and Berigo label boss, Sasha Frere-Jones decided to play Bailey's musicmaker by calling on friends and associates to produce pre-recorded beats for the guitarist to play with in the end, 11 submissions from three continents were sent to Bailey who tied his responses in a single day.

As in any genuine improvisational setting, the risks were great. The two parties might fail to engage, instead reverting to their respective modes, heedless of the other's provocation. The rhythm tracks might become mere backdrop, enforcing conventional musical hierarchies.

But, of course, the greater the risk, the greater the reward, and on this wonderful record the rewards are indeed great. Uncertainty, it comes off as a genuine set of duos, each partner seemingly negotiating with the other. No doubt this is a testimony to Bailey's extraordinary ability to turn any musical situation into a dialogue, asserting himself or withdrawing as the appropriate moments. But a good deal of credit must go to Bailey's interlocutors, who almost without exception, sent him tracks that not only anticipated his moves.

On Daryl Moore's "O For O" and Frere-Jones' "Sasho" it's often difficult to tell who's doing what, as Bailey's volume pedal modulates percussive scrapes, plucks and thumps to compound his partners' spacious dubby antics. But nothing here matches the ferociously noisy interchange between Bailey and Chicago drum 'n' bass DJ Casey Rice on "Resigned Electric." With phenomenal control, Bailey transforms sprays of feedback into quasi-vocal articulations that nearly outrun the already absurd speed of Rice's rapdrum breaks. Henry Kaser offers a quieter take on drum 'n' bass, weaving up wonderfully offbeat rhythms and squashes that Bailey accompanies with damped harmonics.

More spare and elegant is the delicate dance Bailey performs with Burmese percussionist, Ko Thiin Htay. If the duo with Rice foregrounds the electrical charge of the amplified guitar, this duet highlights the instrument's elemental materials, wood and metal. In a similar vein, Bailey gets very nearly funky playing counterpart to ex-Beethead drummer John French's methodical trap drum runs.

But the fusion that these are live duo performances is shattered by John Oswald, who gives Bailey's recorded legacy the plunderphonic treatment, causing the 'live' Bailey to sit this one out. At once predictable and appropriate, Oswald skillfully samples and repeats Bailey's characteristic gestures and vocabulary to perverse effect. But Bailey gets the last laugh. On the final track he leaves the playing to Jim O'Rourke and Lorin Mazzacane Connors, and delivers a wry and hilarious meditation on his love of the electric guitar and his fondness for the name George.

CHRISTOPH COX

the jon spencer

blues explosion

Jonah Bauer, Russell Givens, Jon Spencer

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MUTE

Third Eye Foundation

You Guys Kill Me

COMING THIS FALL

Bristol's co-operative of inspired anti-musicians has been responsible for some of the most primitive and aggressive music to come out of Britain. Flying Saucer Attack's *In Search Of Spices*, on Corpus Hermeticum, still stands as one of the most over the top, extended investigations into feedback holler in recent memory.

Yet for some inexplicable reason, the likes of FSA, Howetone and Third Eye Foundation are held up as a paradigm for slack, indulgent rock. If anything the scene resuscitated punk's DIY aesthetic, disseminating, via its now-defunct Planet imprint, an ecstatic music that pulls on the increasingly diverse strands of the international underground. It's the antithesis of the current UK rock spatio. It might also have been conceived as a reaction against the other Bristol of lazy beats and faccid, speedless trip-hop.

Third Eye Foundation have been quietly practicing their own brand of cracked resistance since 1996. Sennet, their first LP, was all flailing semi-arbitrary rhythmic bombast and speedy loops. Last year's unfairly overlooked *Ghost* saw TEF's Matt Elliot going solo and stretching time even further. Combining the circular motifs of 68-era Can and the heavily damaged breakbeats and spectral studio sounds of Organum and Botsa, Elliot styled a music that managed to well and truly alienate his project from any would-be contemporaries.

Starting with its Byzantine cover art featuring John the Baptist, and songtits like 'No Dove No Covenant' and 'Lucius Writing The Bible', *You Guys Kill Me* is steeped in the deep esoteric tradition of the English underground. Elliot's favoured working methods owe something to Nurse With Wound's hermetic studio practice, of doing time in solitary, building tracks from scratch. The opening track, 'A Galaxy Of Scars', features the same dark brain shuffle that dominated Nurse With Wound's Rock 'N' Roll Station. A rattled bossa nova rhythm trudges on beneath heavy, unearthly strings and back-masked loops. It's a bizarre marriage that primes the album's predominantly off-kilter mood.

Indeed, Elliot's earlier interest in the vaguely 'danceable' rhythms of drum 'n' bass seems to be on the wane. Tracks



Photo by: Matt Elliot

like 'There's A Fight At The End Of The Tunnel' subvert any notions of danceability as rhythms trip over each other, forming sticky, throbbing clusters incapable of any motion other than quivering on the spot. Third Eye's relation to drum 'n' bass directly parallels Coil's relation to Techno. A similar aura of wrongness hovers round both groups, in the way they generate hypnotic tunnels of collapsing beats in response to their fascination with dance culture's rhythm-induced altered states.

"That Would Be Exhibiting The Same Weak Traits" may seem like a throwback to TEF's earlier drum 'n' bass meddlings, but the final track, "In Bristol With A Pistol", stands the album on its head. Starting off at a stalker's pace, at times it comes perilously close to the 'other' sound of Bristol. But tumbling blocks of distorted keyboards à la Martin Rev accumulate the momentum of an avalanche to eventually erode the track. The rhythm cuts dead, and the track trails out in squealing feedback.

This record feels like it was made during many a sleepless night spent pacing a studio, located in a city steeped in the atmosphere of urban aggression, the psychogeography of which it painstakingly maps. The raw sound of Bristol, the album concludes, is the sound of violence.

DAVID KEENAN

vectors, when his beat cascades while finding space to be impetuous. In jazz, freedom is not law, it's hard won, a product of being able to imagine several musical continuities simultaneously. Rob Brown's re-statement of the theme of '3 Rings' has an understated lyricism that's truly touching.

Lightcap's 'Unborn' is a free jazz groover with roots in Ellington's esoteric. Tashar writes up and down the tenor with an intensity that recalls both Coltrane and Peter Brotznann. Lightcap's bass solo is all mystery and twinkling lights. Grass's drums crackling like a dying fire. Brown's final alto statement — cracked multiphonics, polyrhythmic tunes — is a reminder of the irascible North African character of the music pioneered by Coltrane. Today called 'free'.

Scratching The Surface is bristling from the Real School. Incomprehensible to a mainstream hung on racial stereotypes and imagined class, Rob Brown's outreach note as a reminder of the music pioneered by Coltrane. Today called 'free'.

SEN WATSON

Chris Burn's Ensemble

Navigations

NOVA 12 CD

As Richard Barrett — one of the very few 'brought' composers with real understanding of improvisation — argues in his sleeveless, the album is a protest to the idea that a large ensemble needs the discipline of a compositional structure to channel its energies in a fruitful direction. But — like Bushy Flom's conductors — there is a skeletal framework for the pieces performed by Chris Burn's Ensemble. Burn identifies his method in the title. *Navigations*.

Like conductors, his navigations are a way of getting more freedom than usual in an arrangement, without abandoning structure. Improvisers shouldn't be defensive about the pre-planning involved. This music 'does the things which only improvised music can do' as Barrett writes — provided you understand improvisation as making essential reference to some kind of pre-performance preparation. Spontaneous creation is a feeling, but strictly an illusion — like art itself.

The textures of *Navigations* are often quiet and slow moving, with occasional eruptions. Phil Durrant's 'Sowa For Ensemble' has a continuous low dynamic level throughout, contrasting very high and very low sounds. The gestures of Axel Dörner's 'Trio' are more instrumental and intermittent. Matthew Hutchinson's electronics and synthesizer add an important factor in the album but like other potentially solo voices, these mostly merge seamlessly into the ensemble. In fact, there's a remarkable submerging of solo identities. The performances avoid the 'arch' structure common in free improvisation, the process of tumescence and decline. Textures and timbres gradually draw the listener in.

Rob Brown-Lou Grassi

Scratching The Surface

OMP 161 CD

In his sleeveless, veteran crusader for creative music Rob Brown comes to hear in Rob Brown's playing 'near chaos' of Charlie Mariano and Lee Konitz, along with a touch of Stan Getz, even King Curtis and, of course, Charles Parker. Well, in jazz, as everywhere, everything is connected to everything else, but *Scratching The Surface* isn't the closest these names imply. Quite the opposite. It's as if America has come up with a reply to Heisen/Wilkinson/Viel: some free jazz that vibrates with vocalised intensity, summoning

up the suppressed demons of traditional/farm the postmodern blues/jazz.

Rob Brown composed six of the eight tunes. Having arrived in New York in the mid-80s, this amazing artist has been criminally under-recorded. The More Records released a sterling dual disc with pianist Matthew Shap in 1991. Brown springs from the Hedges-Parker-Doghy lineage, his sound brimming with feeling. The idea of music as a realm detached, severed from the mores and grooves of the player's immanence, is trashed in which buoyant note in tenorist Axel Tashar Brown has found another player for whom sound is treasured with meaning, who casts phrases in trembled ground from breath and muscle. The quartet use a bouncing Ornette-

ch beat, a clustered storm that reverts definition as time signature yet has an utterly distinct character. Drummer Lou Grassi and bassist Chris Lightcap toss the groove around so it comes impossible to tell who contradicts, what a collective vibe.

'A Vortex' puts a steadily bluesy bass under a head made of frozen loess voiced in unison by Brown and Tashar. 'Ocean Swells' is a tune with a push, playing a tumbling velocity that enters the players. On '3 Rings', Brown and Tashar moan Ajayem in a climate alive with voices, when everyone else lays out, Grassi's irregularly rolling riffs are revealed as a continuous four-part drum dialogue: the key to the multiple activity of the ensemble peaks. The two saxophones can look into opposing



Eric B and Rakim
Paid In Full: The Platinum Edition
RLAND 524573 242D

It's debatable whether Eric B and Rakim's *Paid In Full* is the most important hip-hop album of the 1980s. If ever did get paid in full for this pioneering record — after all, it's hard to put a value on perfection. Recorded in 1986 and released in 1987, *Paid In Full* is one of the foundation stones of modern hip-hop, an album which sounded impossibly sleek and moody when it appeared and which, over a decade later, sounds spookily contemporary, despite the thousands of records which have since mined it for inspiration and samples. And though it was the contemporary collages of Public Enemy — with their resonant information overload and kickframe samples — that attracted the plaques of the liberal intelligentsia, the music of Eric B and Rakim was the absolute apex of B-boy culture and skills. It was all about precision, poise and flow.

Recorded at a time when The Beastie Boys and Run DMC were taking hip-hop underground by leveraging its steely punch with user-friendly Marli-

gians and theatrical vocals, *Paid In Full* stayed unwaveringly true to the militant sparseness of Schooly D's "Saturday Night" and KRST and Scott La Rock's "Criminal Minds", but somehow managed to bring into being a complex emotionality far removed from either the luntheaded frailty of the former or the chilly gangsterism of the latter. What made *Paid In Full* a quantum leap beyond the efforts of their contemporaries was the way that they created hip-hop's first entirely coherent soundscape. All the various 90s instrumental beat scenes — DJ Shadow, Massive Attack, the whole Triphop schtick — are rooted in it.

Shortly after they met in 1985, the duo made their first recording, "Eric B & Rakim", for the independent Harlem label Zulu. A massive underground hip-hop hit, it also provided a crucial missing link between the nascent hip-hop nation, 70s funk (James Brown sample), European Electro and dub reggae. Eric B's measured, intuitive touch stunted hip-hop production onto a new plateau of sophistication. He clearly knew his dub, and had fully absorbed the possibilities generated by reverb and the mixing board. As an MC, Rakim eschewed the gonzo bragging of his contemporaries in favour of a understated but lyrical and intricate flow of acute observations. By the time he and Eric B came to record the *Paid In Full* album, each was a master of his chosen art.

The album spawned hip-hop's finest classics in "I Know You Got Soul" and "Paid In Full". Aside from its slurred James Brown horn sample, the former is distinguished by its unique dynamic, generated by simultaneously running two separate drum patterns, each in its own stereo channel. The latter is a masterpiece of concision, the baseline climbing and falling with easy fluidity as Rakim breathlessly delivers a tumbling, skipping chain of perfectly measured enjambements. Both were huge hits, an extraordinary achievement considering their decidedly avant garde

construction methods. In "Paid In Full", a quavering flute motif and the constant pedal-drum of vinyl crackle haunt the spaces between the crisp, fluttering beats. This revolutionary technique — deploying the barest suggestions of tonal colour to animate a whole tune — became Eric B's stock-in-trade, and on *Paid In Full*'s non-single cuts, he explored it with dead-eyed accuracy.

Throughout the album, the beats are systematically distressed by the pattering application of distortion and echo. Boogie metallic reverbs create the buzzing swoops and sporadic arpeggios of pure dub that occasionally swamp Rakim's scaly, impassive vocals. Minuscule samples — a sparsely plucked guitar pattern in "Move The Crowd", a curious synthesized harpichord in "As The Rhyme Goes On", eerie spagheti Western chimes in "My Melody" — combine to generate a unified atmosphere. Each atomised sound opens a portal in the mix, importing a haze of space and history, evoking the distant buzz of the city beyond the studio. Somehow, *Paid In Full* conjures up a mazy melancholy mistakenly presumed alien to the culture that produced it. The record is drenched in the still, sad music of humanity.

Given the unique weight of this achievement, it's not surprising that Eric B took exception to a bunch of snooty Brits mucking about with his music. He hated the colourful parody of Coldcut's seven minute remix which propelled "Paid In Full" into the UK charts and opened millions of British ears to the possibilities of the sampler. Nevertheless, that mix occupies a pivotal place in UK dance culture, and this 'platinum edition' of *Paid In Full* includes it and a whole bunch of others on a second CD. Most of them are frankly lightweight, adding little to the flawless poise of the original versions. But none of these dilutions and desecrations has done any serious damage to the source. Now as then, *Paid In Full* is essential listening.

CHRIS SHARP

indifference, as the 'smoking jacket and matching fez' vogue began to pelt. A few years on Combusible Edison have released with an album that does justice to Bryan Ferry's comment: "My favourite 'surrealist group'". The complement can be taken literally, as The Impossible World is permeated and soiled with the "convulsive beauty" that Andre Breton searched for throughout his life.

Nowhere is this commitment to both musicology and surrealism more evident than in the vocals of Mes.Ly Banquette. Previously, her dusky intonation tamed the group with the lush of campiness, now a much improved instrument, her voice can toggle between numerous personas. One moment a Brechtian jazz vamp on "Pink Victim", the next she becomes a human thesaurus negotiating the melody of "Seduction". Through the album's dozen songs she reveals many sides of — or

multiple personalities within — a single character, one that might parallel Breton's ultimate creation, the elusive Nadja. An anglic Mes.Ly bids: "Welcome To Utopia", then begs "Tolerate me until I die", no doubt immediately prior to disappearing into the voidlike voids.

The Millionaire, the group's gaudiest and conceptual masterpiece, has always been a talented mess: able to summon the colours of Dick Dale, Les Paul and Django Reinhardt on demand. Each of the nearly impossible orchestration which characterise The Impossible World turns on its guitar, which dovetails with Hammond B-3 organ, over-amped Rhodes piano and string bass, as Combusible Edison become by turns a swing orchestra, a Weimar cabaret act, a Breton nightclub Junglist turntable jam and the house band in the Jellies' favourite restaurant. For all the parastating studio craft, an overriding sense of fun and

confidence underlies these disparate strands, as with later period Kid Creole albums where jazz rap and sax nestled comfortably in adjacent grooves.

The Combusibles have found their footing in the studio, with the help of producer John Helmond and the crucial participation of sonic fifth columnist Ron Rembold aka Scanner. The latter's shadow extends deep into the album's structure. He updates the group's rhythms with Trance beats and subtle filter sweeps, spinning a lagrange of Cold War tension with his trademark spray of soundbytes plucked from the cellphone ether. Much of The Impossible World can be read as the hybrid of the ultimate Exquisite recording date and a shortwave numbers station: beneath the heavenly and baroque arrangements, scratchy voices rather indecipherable codes, a portent of uncertainty in Utopia.

RICHARD HENDERSON

CTI
Point Seven
CONSPIRACY INTERNATIONAL CTI001 (V)

Chris Carter
Disobedient
CONSPIRACY INTERNATIONAL CTI002 (V)

If ever you needed proof that industrial music was just psychedelia reinvented for the alienated kids of the junk age, Trouble Gaster's manic maniac Geness P-Orange was it. A fan of The Doors and Velvet Underground, he helped transfigure psychedelia's sense of amoral dislocation into brutal urban Electronic. Nose was one weapon in TG's guerrilla armoury, but the post-Kohlerian computer world also beckoned, with dystopian synthesizers that would also be picked up by the likes of The Human League.

Orange's one time TG colleagues Chris Carter and Casey Farris Tuts brought other

influences to the group. Carter, in particular, expressed a liking for Abba, and although his current music hardly shows signs of a Swedish disco influence, it does show an interest in eclecticism and a distrust of derivative sonic elements. Chris and Dave are largely stuck to what they know: assorted blends of breathy synthpop and dark ambience which replace TG's tough edges with hi-tech polish in their CFI guise. They produce dark Electronica for black-clad synthesizer nerds. This is the strand of psychedelia that embraced Techno-Italienism and bathed the cosmic music of the 70s, as well as the considerably less interesting New Age synth music that followed. Port Severn is disappointing, a parade of limo-welly-washy atmospheres and dated rhythms congealing in a languid, lethargic drift. It would make great soundtrack music, but relies too heavily on formless newness.

At times, however, this lack of interest in current trends pays dividends. The thoroughgoing gulf of "Laser" on Carter's solo album *Disobedient* (they again-sounding rhythms) into the groth house sent a Techno Tangerine Dream if only such a thing could ever be done right. "Solomon" engulfs the rotor blades of a military helicopter in a chemical ocean, while most of the album keeps a latticework of electronic pulsation free of too much gaseous intent. If *Disobedient* is a sound made every bit as dated as Port Severn, at least it's a little less hamstrung by Stygian gloominess.

ERIAN DOUGLAS

Dominic Duval with The CT String Quartet

The Navigator

LCI 0257 CD

Ivo Perelman with The CT String Quartet

The Alexander Suite

LCI 0258 CD

The opening lines of The CT String Quartet stand for Cecil Taylor. Cecil wrote some music for strings which he showed to Duval: his boss. Duval put together a quartet to play it. That performance hasn't happened, but the quartet has found other useful employment.

The billing of *The Navigator* is a trifle misleading: since Duval is an integral part of the quartet. His playing is prominent, but the other musicians are hardly silent. As a bassist, Duval gets in by breaking the standard string-quartet lines, dropping second voice, and the purpose of hearing those deeper tones frequently pushes him centre stage. Neither he nor his colleagues — Jason Hawking (bass), Ron Lawrence (viola) and Tomoko Uchida (cello) — spend much time cleaving to the conventional roles or registers of their instruments. Nevertheless, the music is securely rooted in the string quartet literature, and you can hear echoes of composers long through the tradition: from Cramb through Bartok to Schubert. Sometimes as on "Reverence", there are clear nods to Taylor

and elsewhere suggestions of Albert Ayler's strange "Change Has Come" group motility in the divisions of the opening passages of "Terra Plana". The Navigator is a major achievement.

Unlike Duval, saxophone Perelman is a guest soloist, but they know each other's moves. Duval has played in Perelman's group too. Perelman's tenor tends to dominate because it's a more penetrating instrument than the strings, but the quartet is not there to accompany the saxophone — at least, not in the sense of providing a background — but to go along as valuable companions on a journey of discovery, dropping back when it chooses, while mostly engaging in equal commentary on the landscape and the conduct of the enterprise.

The quartet plays without the sax from time to time, and the results are always impressive, but the album comes over as a showcase for Perelman because he is on such stunning form. This is a brilliant, exemplary performance: both in terms of technical proficiency and emotional power, but he never gets carried away with his own agenda. The relationship with the quartet is genuinely interactive and fruitful, and there are some remarkable incidents of total cross-dressing, calling for sure double takes before you can decide whether a sound is made by strings need a skilful blending of both or a supernatural synthesis of something fresh and unique. Highly recommended.

HARRY WITHERDEN

EAR

Data Rape

SPACE AGE 0880101 CD

EAR

Death Of A Robot (For The Radiophonic Workshop)

DORE 00259

Coloursound

Soundtrack: For An Imaginary Life

SPACE AGE 0881009 CD

You could never dismiss Sonic Boom (aka Peter Kembeni) as unimpressive: even his work with Spacejam 3 sought to expand parameters of sound. That chops manifested into the boundary-stretching philosophies of EAR in 1990, and has now evolved into these rhinoceros Data Rape experiments. These collages were by assembling (using light human voice synthesizers) originally marketed as Speak And Spell toys by Texas Instruments during the late 70s — you can just about detect the tinny squeals of synthesized American computer speech which have been customised and reworked through a process called circuit-bending. It creates a whole series of irregular oscillations by exploiting the instabilities of the audio instruments, and by passing data between the unrelated internal circuit boards. Electronic sounds are modified by random signals into a

variety of pitches and pulses, resulting in Data Rape's mesh of aural loops and blobs. "You may not think so, but there's a strand of discipline concealed in this flailing, indiscriminate Electronica. It creeps up on you gradually, as the vibrations provide intoxicating comfort, in much the same way as the Ambient work of Eric or Labradford. Data Rape is a crude structure, but it's also a highly original order of music.

The Death Of A Robot single is a continuation of the Data Rape experiments. Released on limited 9" vinyl, it's a 20 minute homage to the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's Dr Who scores. Over 30 years since the series began, the Workshop's electronic music has been a principal source of inspiration for much of today's leftfield Electronica. The chilly atmospheres of "Death Of A Robot" captures the essence of their work, but ultimately fails to convey the genuine diversity of an undisciplined institution.

Soundtrack For An Imaginary Life, released on Kembeni's Space Age label, is Coloursound's second album. It dispenses with the throbbing drones and resounding guitar of 1995's *You're Only As Good As Your Sound*. The new disc's lighter compositions are alluring and hypnotic, if somewhat New Agey.

Soundtrack, has undoubtedly absorbed elements of Coloursound's mainman Matthew J. Tow's pop-psychedelic group Drop City, but its main appeal is its dense, mysterious ambience. Its sedate intent to make you feel like you're ingesting a mild anesthetic. It's a soothing experience, like floating in an isolation tank but presumably a whole lot cheaper.

WILLIAM PAVAR LEE

Exhaust

Exhaust

CONFESSION C1004 LP

Despite Godspeed You! Black Emperor's aversion to technology and their anti-artistic commitment to live performance, their drummer Aslan Giv's side project Exhaust happily exploits studio witchcraft.

As with all the releases on Godspeed's Hotel 21/20/Confession label, Exhaust's beautifully packaged disc of vinyl comes with screenprinted jacket and thick card inserts. Their manifesto in French asserts their distaste for labels like rock, jazz. Techno and encourages bewildered punters to find out about their music by contacting them directly rather than getting their information from the media. It's your best stop here and call your travel agent.

In their more insular moments Exhaust harks the dream rhythmic crack of The Heist when they plough through doomy symphony-thick air. Elsewhere, though, big booty breakdowns and surging reels of noise sound so studious playing and obvious, they're worlds away from parent group Godspeed's predilection for slow hypnotic movements. "The Black Horns Of H21" does boast some fantastic circular clarinet work,

courtesy of multi-instrumentalist Gordon Krieger, but the only series to further confuse matters. The inclusion of two "reconstructions of previous tracks" is yet more evidence of a severe identity crisis.

It is a mess that further reinforces the belief that one idea ruthlessly pursued is the visionary's true path to enlightenment. Exhaust are lost and malleable.

DAVID KEMAN

Michael Finnissey

Kreutzer Quartet

PETER HAYDON CD

Here are seven of Michael Finnissey's string quartets recorded in St. John's Church, Loughlin, using a pair of microphones. Sound engineer, producer, digital editor, cover designer and booklet editor is David Leisher who also runs the label. Such dedication is not unusual for Finnissey supporters, who tend to be partisan, claiming that he is one of the few real composers to have emerged in England this century.

Exposure to the music encourages you to order the pot. Finnissey makes no modish nods towards the popular, but his extremism brings him into the orbit of other radical sounds. Peter Harnony was composed in the early 90s. A pure descending melody that could be an English madrigal meets weeping chords simultaneously shimmering and tugged. Finnissey refuses to make the choice between traditional tonality and 12 tone, their chordal vibrations and atonal crises together create his highly personal textures. Nor is lyrics eschewed. Indeed, melody is pursued with such passion it churns up mud from the unconscious. Clean harmony and chaotic mark operate dialectically, transforming themselves into each other in unexpected twists and turns.

Pure serialism can be abstract and pretty (eg Milton Babbitt) with Finnissey, each discord hurls. Nobody's Jig (1992) is a reminder of the unsettling nature of desecrating the key system. Even the sweetness of the violins is sick and smother, wheezing high notes are fraught with anguish. Yet the composer's focus is clinical — swatted terror frozen into fine art crystal. Innerlines aggrate between instruments like throat hissing between operators. An energetic wisp makes an unresponsive cello sound like feedback hum — alienated gestures against a backdrop of urbane nose pollution. At the same time, any rose may bleed into the background and affect the whole. Finnissey undermines music's sinew of affirmation, suggesting parallels to A Handful Of Dust or Richard Youngs.

The initial theme of *Musical Forms Of Consensus* (1997) is a folksy air. Beethoven might have employed, but instead of imitating respectable dialogue, it provides a stony of interference and malign echo. Like a frenzied insomnia resolving an insoluble problem, the music cannot relax but nevertheless gestures beautiful violin lines, intricacies plotted without a trace of cliché. Strong

Teiji Ito

King Ubu

TEACOR TQ7076 CD

The Beach Boys

Endless Harmony: OST

CAPTIVA 7243495639126 CD

Opposite ends of the spectrum you might think: one of the most successful pop groups of all time matched with one of the least known composers of the past 50 years. Yet fame or the lack of it can mask a lot of other qualities. At this end of the century I feel that the polar extremes of Brian Wilson and Teiji Ito have something in common.

Slating the various unreleased obscurities, scraps, live recordings and alternate mixes of *Endless Harmony* into my own personalised Beach Boys story (a construction of memories, speculation, official history, scintillous rumour and bootleg patchwork), I see Brian Wilson as a composer whose talent was self-destructive. As endless as the mythic summer, the vivacious, versatility and mass appeal of that talent overshadowed his central agenda, which was to make a heartfelt intimate music, innocent of stylistic restrictions. Commonplace experiences and emotions were amplified to levels of feeling that Brian would call 'spiritual', yet he never resorted to bombast.

Every Beach Boys track was performable by a rock 'n' roll band. The epitome of this musical approach — let's call it 'small music', for want of a better term — was *Smiley Smile*. A kind of Beach Boys (Acid) Party record, *Smiley Smile* was music you could make with your family, sitting around in a sandpit with a melodica and some wind chimes (plus a genius songwriter, perfect harmony voices, limbersh studio time and drugs, and some of the best session musicians in the world).

The soundtrack to the recent documentary film, *Endless Harmony*, the CD, eavesdrops on Brian denoting the frighteningly complex "Heroes And Villains", just piano and voice, and making the song work; we also hear a beautiful live performance, from Carnegie Hall, of "Wonderful", one of the most delicately human songs from *Smiley Smile*. Tracks like engineer Stephen Desper's vibraphone mix of "I'll Die", previously available only on bootleg, or the live-in-the-studio version of "God Only Knows", strip the songs back to their essence, gorgeous but painful. This slow leakage of unreleased fragments builds up an image, probably illusory,



Boa wonder: Teiji Ito

of what Brian Wilson might have created had he not been so hugely successful from his teen years.

Success was neither an obstacle nor an option to Teiji Ito. Aside from soundtracks that can be heard on the films of his wife, Maya Deren, Ito's work had vanished into near-oblivion. Maya Deren died in 1961; Ito died in Haas in 1982. Then one of the blue, *Melies* was released by the *What Next?* label last year, and now Guy Klucenick and John Zorn have resurrected his 1961 score for Allied Jarry's play, *Ubu Roi*. "Hornstrumpot" as Pa Ubu would say.

Again, it's 'small music', in the best sense: music you can make by yourself, with a tape recorder, some simple instruments and a clear vision. I can imagine compiling a hoax bootleg that passed off tracks like "Mama Ubu's Dance" or "Music Box" (a version of "Where Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone" for glass bottles and thumb pianos) as undiscovered *Smile* demos abandoned by Brian Wilson during his cutlery period, simply because the warmth and stylistic freedom of Ito's music is so similar in spirit.

A whole strain of improvisation is anticipated here by Ito's use of 'exotic' instruments and electronic manipulations; his vocal explorations, his strange juxtapositions, his focus on the human scale, his humour. I'm reminded, for example, of Willem Breuker's theatre music of the late 60s, though Ito's wit charms rather than bludgeons. Most of all, I'm reminded of Teiji Ito, a quiet, unique voice now audible to those prepared to listen.

DAVID TOOP

sensibility, as well as his ability to subsume a distinctive approach to improvisation within a reformed compositional identity. The lovely lyrical alto solo that introduces "Emergent" encapsulates these aspects of Berne's playing while the closing "BR Incident" plots an effortless trajectory from post-bop effusions to post-Coltrane dissonance.

Berne says that he established his Screwing label with the desire to release own-name recordings by some of the musicians whose talents he found integral to his success. Marc Ducret's recent CD, and now Formanek's *Am I Bothering You*, a recording of solo acoustic bass, more than justify this show of faith. The material may be improvised or composed: the closing version of Muddy Waters' "Sking Stone" is the only cover — but it is certainly carefully considered. The material ranges from the percussive ("Crowback"), via guttural rubato passages ("Overhead Jazzer") and limber, almost funkily thrumming ("Diesel Shortbread") to melancholy howling in the bass's upper registers ("Theremin"). The attention to textual detail in the recording is exciting, ensuring a heightened level of listening pleasure: is that the sound of Formanek's shirt dragging over the bass? Or do I just have an overactive imagination? When you're drawn in to listen, the closely you're in another zone.

TIM OWEN

Global Electronic Network

g e n e t i c k z
HARVEST 7243495639126 CD

Khan & Walker

Stimulus 01-01
HARVEST CD

h.e.a.d.

07 98
HARVEST 7243495639126 CD

Dr Walker & M Flux

16 Lovegroves For The Space Gurls
HARVEST 7243495639126 CD

Kerosene

Worms Quaggy
PHARMA 04621 CD

Witchman Vs Jammin Unit

Indistinct
BLUE PLANET CD

Quarter (1984) has a narrative structure: bravely stepping out from the systems, obliteration of a lot of modern composition. It begins with a few of subliminal impulses after seven minutes: there's a jump into loudness, as if floodlights had been switched on. Climactic voices pierce at each other like gulls alternating with violent pluckings from the lower instruments. It sounds simple, but Finney is stretching his players — irrational timings and unexpected intervals — so there's none of the pop condescension of boom-boom Minimalism.

This release makes no concessions to the mass market. Two members of the quartet contribute essays. They're so enamoured in Finney's scores they don't stop to think how the music might sound to people unversed in modern classical music. Finney follows out the romantic legacy from the inside, spinning lines so dense they sound as if they are traced on a bomb ready to explode. Perhaps the feeble beauty admired by Finney's devotees is not so much the pinnacle of art as the ring of truth.

BON WATSON

Michael Formanek

Am I Bothering You?
SCREWING SCREW 70006-13

Tim Berne & Michael Formanek

Omerry People
LITTLE BEHEMOTH RECORDS 00013 CD

Omerry People strips Tim Berne's music down to the bare essentials in a duet setting for his saxophones and Michael Formanek's bass. The session emphasises his keen melodic

Throughout the decade, Air Leaders' (former Koch, Jaki Dr Walker) and Cam Onal (aka Jammer) (until) have generated a dizzying array of pseudonyms, collaborators, labels and musical styles. It would take an obsessive/compulsive of the most determined kind to trace all the releases linked to them. In typically prolific fashion, this month sees another six hours (another six hours of music) showing up a few more minute variations on mid-tempo electronic music.

German Harvest has picked up the first three albums in this batch from the New York-based El Turco Loco label run by Can Orak (aka Khan) and Cem's brother. Much of the music seems to have been generated during that trip that Igmar Krok made to the States earlier this year. Global Electronic Network is the guide under which Can Orak and Krok explore (and, compulsive but carefully withheld) grooves with a fine array of tiny Acid touches, *gün ot rock'tır* is a 20 minute mini-album; its concision means that the crunch breaks remain effective throughout.

As Khan and Walker, the same pair produced Simplex 01-05 during the same sessions. Here they explore a sort of minimal organic irregularities which amount to entropic elaborations on a single rhythm pattern dabbling in (and smeared) moody streaks of abstract noise, and dropping percussive elements in and out with diaphane finesse.

Also in America: Khan and fellow German *ex-pat* Roger Columbus (aka Korozeel) linked up over the New Year to continue their head project. 97/98 is a fine example of the spy, saucy and frankly weirdo futurist that permeates Cologne's Electronic scene. It's an immaculately conceived selection of unusual tracks, revealing in titles like 'It's Funky Enough', 'It's Fast Enough', 'Too Packed To Rock', 'Too Deep To Rock', and packing out its loose-minded rhythms with a plethora of tactile squelches and stunts.

Even more lighthearted — at least in conception — is the 18 *Loversongs* For The Secret Girls collaboration between Dr Walker and the mysterious Bochum-based M-Fix. A recent addition to the El Turco Loco network. With its vintage porno artwork and suggestive titles ('Jack These Spicy Slut' for one) this album is part a manifestation of Igmar Krok's fascination with cat cheese — he recently inaugurated Steuerflucht (import promises to explore the crazy world of Bolemic snuff in obsessive detail. Despite its smutty frivolousness, however 18 *Loversongs* For The Secret Girls is fundamentally serious. The music is sparse, tight and queering with poignant harrowing adorns. The 'comedy' chapter interludes seem designed to raise sociological questions more than slyly chuckle.

In similar vein is Korozeel's solo album for Can Orak's theme label. *Woman Quality's* songwriters are primarily demonstrated by the title out a driving, insistent, six minute neo-Electro workout which augments the minimal beats with sizzling, soaring, overloading tones and artfully arranged SPX. Sterling stuff.

Finally, the London based Witchman (aka John Roome) gets his hands on Jammin' Units line *Dee Dee And Bird* album and tests it into the moody depths of inferno. Abandoning the constricted drum in bass of previous outings. Roome instead describes a calculating way with attenuated riffs and do-it-myself tremors — it makes for an evocative journey, filled with splintered guitar and shadowy cries.

CHRIS SHARP

Peter Hammill

THU
FRI 10:00 PM (MUSIC 12)

Peter Blegvad

Hungarian's Hill
WED 11:00 PM

This is (brief) singer-songwriter Peter Hammill's 40th album, released on the eve of his 50th birthday statistics which underline a consensus opinion to rock's fashion-conscious fancies. When Progressive rock grew bloated and monstrous, Hammill's Van Der Graaf Generator persisted in its raw, naked brand of dissonant, discordant rock, and when punk finally brought down the Prog edifice in the mid to late 70s, he continued to hone his prodigious songwriting skills year on year with solo albums of uncompromising idiosyncrasy. Always the auteur, Hammill is the Igmar Bergman of rock, obsessively exploring a cluster of cherished existential themes like Time, Consciousness and Memory, and tirelessly working with a small team of disjunctive long-term associates. Appropriately he now controls the means of production with his own recording studio, Tinta Infinita and label Fel. An assured lyricist, his latest work is rich and canny, a better job.

Compared to 1997's superb yet scintillating under-revealed *Everyone You Hear* This conforms the listener in a more direct manner with less emphasis on detailed arrangements. The multitudes of brooding guitars and electronics have mostly made way for a rift-based energy — except the rifts seldom appear where you'd expect them. Oh 'Unheard' they come in two-thirds of the way through with Hammill's guitars grinding away beneath David Jackson's scolding sax. Hammill cleverly punctuates 'Slut' with two shrieked, music-like melisma echoed by Jackson's sax and again in the final guitar peckered. There's also a hint of Phideus Eastern texture in Stuart Greenleaf's snarling 'Nightman' and 'Fallen (The City Of Night)' where his polyphonic FX soar above the formidable bass density that begs to dominate the mix. The density reaches a ferocious intensity on 'Always Is Near' driven by the alternative power of Hammill's carnal lyrics and gripping vocal performance. 'The Light Continent' the longest track here at 14 minutes closes the album returning to those evocative, brooding electronics, as Hammill's sublimated vocals set forth a vision of polar expanse and human insignificance.

Peter Blegvad has also long enjoyed out singer-songwriter status. Although familiar with his recordings with seminal avant-rockers Henry Cow and singer-bassist John Greaves this is the first time we've heard one of his solo albums. And if Hammill's Hill is typical fare then the quality leaves a lot to be desired. Apart from Blegvad's mildly eccentric lyrics the rest is PGR rock that wouldn't offend a John Armstrong fan. Even Greaves and Chris Cutler's contributions sound desolately ordinary in this World context.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Chris Knox

Yea!
FRI 10:00 PM (MUSIC 2)

Peter Jefferies

Substatic
WED 11:00 PM (MUSIC 12)

In the early days of the Flying Nun label and the New Zealand pop-primative explosion, it was Chris Knox, rock track down under his arm who documented most of it. Previously a face-painted loon honing NZ garage legends. The Jeremy he went on to farm the bizarre mutant-folk duo Tall Dwarfs, and to periodically release solo documents of his hallucinogen-heavy pop psych. Yea! Knox's swift solo LP is a richly rewarding foray into the rather-nebulous of a benign yet deeply lived mind.

Knox has always had a precise grasp of vocal quality. It's no surprise that his name is often uttered in the same breath as Syd Barrett and Roky Erickson. Like Syd especially he's capable of the kind of from-the-heart speech and innately pitched cantata which causes even grown men to sniff in 'Barstok' he's conjured up some with yet another stomach-aching build for outsiders. He tackles twinking minnows ('Gold's' swaggering rockabilly and from Chris-era La Rued ('Tantamount To Treason') before wrapping the whole thing up with a battered 17 minutes-plus of dense tape collage.

Jefferies is another NZ maverick who has been petrolling the farthest reaches of free thought since the early 80s. Substatic is a weightier more chaotic counterpart to the nocturnal instrumental of his duo album with Jono Lone. As Seen Two Birds (recently released by Drunken Fish).

He builds up tension over four long rhythmic workouts which are occasionally splattered by anemic sounds of heavily lifted guitar. Yet they all anticipate the steady resonance of the closing 'Three Movements', a full-on, 16 minute ramblous over-arranged mix of dense, densest of early 80s folk's cosmic chaff. High pitched guitar scratches around the periphery as the keyboard slowly winds the track down into charged silence.

DAVID KENAN

Robert M Lepage & Martin Tetreault

Calles La De La De La Vinylo
AMSTERDAM'S PNEUMATICS 4PM/5 PM

René Lussier & Martin Tetreault

Dur Noyau Dur
AMSTERDAM'S PNEUMATICS 4PM/5 PM

Intended as a homage to both Maria Callas on the 20th anniversary of her death, and to her record company, EMI in its centenary year, *Calles La De La De La Vinylo* is a series of duets for clannet and turntables that are as poorly executed as they are conceptually

flawed. Not content with exploring the grain of a recorded voice in its charged relationship with the fluid tonalities of a solo woodwind instrument, Lepage and Tetreault indulge instead in a grotesque ventriloquist act whereby the dead opera star is made to yelp like a porcupine on 'Les Caracches', impersonate a car alarm on 'Le Système D'Alarme Callier', then shriek and huff her way along to the bumps and grind of a home workout LP on 'Calaisaorobor'. Only when the duo launch into a gauche approximation of exotic Easy Listening on 'Yma Callas' does it become clear just how early their thinking on this project has gone. Possessing a vocal range of over four and a half octaves, Yma Samos suited vinyl in a way that Maria Callas never could. What made Callas an international celebrity was not the voice, swarms of the stereophonic hi-fi system but the glowing intimacy of the television screen. Always a visible diva, it was as necessary to read the flickering emotional responses in her face as it was to hear her voice when she sang. For all the indignities which Lepage and Tetreault seek to pile upon her, Callas still excites them.

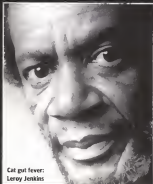
More successful by far are the aid, archived landscapes to be found on *Dur Noyau Dur*. Tetreault on turntables, pick-up and radio receiver, shows such a marked rapport with René Lussier's electric and acoustic guitars that some genuine sparks are struck during the course of these predominantly short pieces. Recorded live in the studio with a minimum of overdubs, the set clicks and hums with radioactive menace. Like a Geiger counter picking up atomic particles in the air, the microphone captures a thin ring of tiny sounds, which are then amplified accordingly. The result is a layered atmospheric affair: reawakening the lifetime potential of the record deck as a compositional tool. This being a CD, however watch out for the hidden track at the end.

KEIN HOLLINGS

William Parker

Through Acceptance Of The Mystery Palace
BRU-1112 CD

Errante is a tiny independent label based in Northampton, Massachusetts that is attempting to resurrect, promote and push forward free jazz in the late 90s with the same kind of enthusiasm that ESP-Disk did in the late 60s. To date this label has released a dozen CDs, each of which holds something of interest for those jazz morms who are still irresistibly attracted to the inert burning flame of the New York City experience. Occasionally Errante release a classic example of the genre, and boss labeler William Parker's *Through Acceptance Of The Mystery Palace* is one of these. Originally released on his own Concord Records label in 1981 in an edition of 500 copies, Parker's debut was inspired by the music of



Cat got fever:
Leroy Jenkins

Leroy Jenkins

Solo
LOWLY MUSIC/LD9961 CD

Lowly Music is not a record company to be hunted or pressured into an injudicious release. It proceeds at its own measured pace and ensures that each issue is a landmark of its kind. In 1990 it produced a superb CD of solo violin improvisations by Takahisa Kosegi. Now it registers another milestone with this very different but equally absorbing violin/viola set from Leroy Jenkins.

Jenkins's playing is itself sufficiently justified the existence of Chicago's Association for the

Advancement of Creative Music, which he joined in 1965. The climate of exploration nurtured in his collaborations with Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith and Mihail Richard Abrams enabled Jenkins to confidently pursue the extension of the violin's expressive range. The group took from John Cage's pronouncements additional permission to approach every instrument as a total configuration; in other words, they assumed freedom from obligation to play within recognised parameters or to utilise only inherited techniques.

Freedom brings its own responsibilities, and Jenkins has always appeared highly disciplined, as well as relentlessly inventive. It is a combination that has taken him into suitably elevated company: he has worked with Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp and Ornette Coleman. One of the peaks of his career was reached during the 1970s as a member of The Revolutionary Ensemble. Bassist Sirone and percussionist Jerome Cooper provided ideal settings for the mature, yet still evolving Jenkins style. A further high point was reached with *Solo Concert*, released by Inda Navigation in 1977. This Lowly release offers a rare opportunity to experience another unaccompanied performance on both violin and viola. It's been a long time coming. The recording was actually made in 1992, at a concert before an appreciative audience in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Jazz listeners have habitually regarded the violin with suspicion, accepting the instrument's presence with an equivocation bordering on mistrust. Occasionally, musicians have emerged with the capacity to quell such uneasiness. Classically, Stuff Smith and — Duke Ellington's choice — Ray Nance; subsequently, Jean-Luc Ponty and Didier Lockwood at

their most inspired, and Jenkins's erstwhile pupil Billy Bang, have attained a level of acceptance. More than any of them, Jenkins has succeeded in securing respect, not merely through instrumental skill, but by his singular capacity to redefine the idiom.

Solo includes a stirring interpretation of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps," and an eloquent reading of Dizzy Gillespie's "Wouldn't You." Yet neither here nor in his original compositions does Jenkins subordinate his musical judgement to the dictates of generic convention. He plays his own music, an intensely personal mode of expression, instantly recognisable yet entirely free from cliché. His approach derives little from European tradition; titles such as "Blues #11," "Folk Song" and "Keep On Trucking Brother" seem designed to signal his detachment from that legacy. Ornette Coleman's excursions on violin surely left their mark, but Jenkins's evolution has far more overt precision: it is more deliberate, yet at the same time ostensibly more effortless.

The dynamic of his playing is purposefully linear, but as he untwines the latent possibilities of basic melodic materials, he works continual transformations through rhythmic and textural variation. Any sound which the instrument potentially contains is available for his use. There is a rare clarity to the shape of his improvisations, but it never appears that the violinist is going through the motions, in accordance with some a priori template. Nor does the stream of invention ever lapse into banal stringing for effect. In short, this is a masterful and exemplary demonstration of the improviser's art, beautifully controlled, yet open to surprise.

JULIAN COWLEY

ill-motivated. His underground work is baffling, unlike Kenneth's direct, raw brutality. Innu, Mekas and Philip Doring and those importantly writing of Kenneth Patchen. These diverse demerits were then further explored by Parker and his assembled band of players for a series of sessions that were recorded between 1974 and 1979. Five different ensembles were also set up, ranging from a simple trio to a full blown octet. Those involved included such left some superstars as saxophonists Daniel Carter, Charles Brackeen and Jerome Mooncock, horn player Toshiron Kondo, cellist Tristan Henninger, violinists Billy Bang and Polly Bradfield, plus many others. Music subliminal abstract imagery and spoken prose converge together throughout the record to form live near flawless examples of free expression which bravely resist the temptation to seriously blow off steam for the sake of it. There is a sense of unburdened organisation at work here — and as well as being a showcase for Parker's thrilling bass playing the solo at the heart of the covering, extended "Distant Flower" being one example to treasure) the feeling comes

across that it is here that truth was took the next giant step in its evolution, any process and grew wings

EDWIN PUNCEY

Plastikman

AntiForte (BC)
NONALPHABET RECORDS/CD

AntiForte is a mosaic collection of material originally intended for Plastikman's projected third album *Kink*, which was shelved after he was deported from the USA in 1995. Back in Ontario, Plastikman also Richie Haves recorded *Consumed* in 1995. AntiForte therefore forms a useful bridge between his second album *Muck* and the crumbling wreckage of *Consumed*. It is a slick but curiously uninspiring affair that does throw much light on the shifts that occurred between *Muck* and *Consumed* it neither reveals any qualitative advances on the former, nor does it bear much relation to the shaggy down-dubby experimentation of either the latter or Hawk's *Consumed*. On *Consumed*, Hawk's *Consumed* 12" series. On *Consumed*, Hawk's intended the mood of the earlier

Concert tracks to each out a dark, heavy, intense of dense strings, numbing basslines, cavernous truds and a fuzzy, cerebral disturbance. Where *Consumed* radically softened the earlier, spiky, plasticized outbursts to a flickering burn. AntiForte coheres around a purist sensibility drawn from the nightmarish atmospherics of classic Detroit weightless, sweeping strings, bustling 808 percussion, and a reliance on the Acid modulations of the 303. The overbearing pulse of "Hydrokondrak" and the clanking "Skateboard" offer the only real insights and escape routes out of this sickly, nitro-like impasse. While the album retains Hawk's concern with the construction of a deep, sensual architecture, tempting the listener to get lost in its slowly shifting environs, he too often resorts to the known to achieve it. Where *Plastikman* pushed the 303 to its limits, on AntiForte Hawk seems content to spin out a tightly controlled series of familiar textures. Nothing untold or unexpected. He is simply sleepwalking. In the light of the advances made by the Concert tracks and *Consumed*, AntiForte comes across as regressive and low on ideas.

DAVID HOWELL

Project Dark

Excited By Gramophones
Volume 4
VARIOUS RECORDS/MASTRO TOPIKI

Forget vinyl: what about the sonic properties of cheese? Project Dark's limited edition 7" singles were manufactured from porous materials — white bread, Edam cheese, hot Brazilian glass/paper, steel, and so on. This reluctant CD — a sleeveless reggae of the use of the format — treats the contents of their entire singles bag catalogue as source material. The music's aesthetic is best summed up by the image on the back of the CD — an exploding turntable.

Though drum patterns are used on some tracks, most of the music is concerned with manipulations of rough sound. The album begins with the noise of a fireworks rocket and moves into a succession of succinct and briefly sound pieces, covering a wide range of tones and fascinated with the blurring into noise. However, only the mopey, long, jake's "Drawing" is really committed to the flummery territory of howling, electric viscera twirling

The rest depends more on the often ragged sound textures of the source material. The longest, the eight-minute "Spongers", moves from calm drift into a drum + bass sequence overlaid with a rasping, floating sound and, towards the end, eruptions. This is where the strengths of the music come across most forcefully when Priest's Dark are not tied up in dull art pretentious posturing and stave well clear of whimsy. On top of the best tracks, the Project Dark nucleus — Ashley Davies, Kirsten Reynolds, and Tony Pedersen — is augmented by Dub Colossus of Transglobal Underground. (Elsewhere, collaborators include artist-Hoodoo: Billy Childish.) For all the noise input, the music works best through playfulness. Low-cal avant garde for sure, but somehow with near zero gravitas and a lurking pop sensibility. It's diverting stuff. But it's a more wholesome racket than they'd like it to be.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Eliane Radigue Songs Of Malarépa LOWLY MUSIC LC00207 2XCD

Eliane Radigue Triologie De La Mort M RECORDS 119 3XCD

Taken separately, *Songs Of Malarépa* and *Triologie De La Mort* stand as landmarks of "Himalayan journey" they confirm Eliane Radigue as a unique and major voice in contemporary music. Radigue was born in Paris and still lives in France. She studied techniques of electroacoustic composition with Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, but her extensive work in America has exposed her to other approaches to composing and performing. At New York University's electronic music centre, for example, she came into contact in the early 1970s with Morton Subotnik, Laurie Spiegel and Rhys Chatham. At that point she was equipped technically to produce interesting work, but in 1975 the course of her musical development underwent a radical shift, along with the rest of her life, when she became seriously committed to Tibetan Buddhism. Four years later, after experiencing the rigours of retreat, she returned to writing music. Immensely disciplined, she works slowly and her recorded output is small, but 1998 is a watershed year, seeing the release of these two monumental musical cycles.

Songs Of Malarépa, completed in 1983, comprises five pieces, settings of texts by the 11th century Tibetan saint it is named after. Radigue used an analogue Arp synthesizer to generate a subdued bed of drones and gentle pulses. Drifting tones seem to evoke the passage of clouds through gold air, while watery sunlight shimmers on distant mountain peaks. Little seems to change yet somehow there is a sense of continual motion over that backdrop. Radigue

introduces two venerable voices. Lama Kunga Rinpoche (born in Lhasa in the wood pe year) chants delightfully in Tibetan. Robert Ashley, born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1930, then recites a translation. Ashley's vedantic Hinduism brings in the perfect vehicle for these parables of rural Tibet's pastures and canyons. Lowly Music issued the first two songs on vinyl in 1983. The central sections, available now for the first time, confirm the stature of the cycle. The hour-long concluding part "Mia's Journey Inspired By A Dream", appeared on CD in 1987, but here it's culminating descent into a churning brew of monkish chanting and murky electronic voracious assumes its full potency.

Triologie De La Mort, an extended sonic meditation on death and birth, is arguably still more impressive. Its opening sequence, "Kyeme, Intermediate States" was realised in 1988 and appeared on a previous XI CD in 1990. Here are drones, waves and pulses again. Not the stark sustained tones of Phil Noto's music, but a constant agitation of micro events within an ostensible stasis. Compassion might be made with the apparently static works of Gyemto Serke, an Tibetan composer also steeped in Christian philosophy who paid similar attention to the inner life of sound. The resulting music is very different, but both Radigue and Serke have consciously sought enlightenment through the discipline of hearing. On a more superficial level, the scientific landscape that emerges in "Kyeme" may recall the esoteric tone poems of Brian Eno's *On Land*. But no Ordinance Survey map covers the terrain. Radigue is exploring The non-Euclidean space of the Tibetan Book Of The Dead as her inspiration, and an entire cosmology is implied through this music. "Kalashini", the second part, traces a turbulent imaginary journey around the most sacred mountain in the Himalayas, a route reputed to lead into other spheres of being. Radigue's notes to "Kourme" the final part affirm doctrines of rebirth through Christian references, but the soundworld is entirely consistent with the earlier sections. Paradox with other music may assist the uninitiated, but Radigue's work really is unique. The singularity of her achievement only enhances its magnitude.

ARIAN COWLEY

Sam Rivers & Tony Hymas Eight Day Journal NATO 717726 CD

The idea of a European composer moving over an American sax legend to play to specially created music is intriguing. Recorded in a studio in 1998, *Eight Day Journal* documents a project put together by Tony Hymas after discussions at insomniac Thelons, currently a Ritzville of French imports and experimentation. His 13 piece orchestra includes Leicester-born trumpeter

Henry Lowther, French guitarist Noel Akchote and an English rhythm section of Chris Laurence and Paul Carus, plus woodwinds and strings.

Hymas's arrangements are bright and busy folding together. Swinging. Weill and Stravinsky with motifs from romanticism. Impressionism and jazz. Unfortunately, we don't seem to hear much from Sam Rivers. An early exchange with Akchote (on "Sarmed 4 Hars, 1984") has him bubble and screech manfully, but thereafter he's lost in a patchwork of ping melancholia, drawing minor tangos and Mingus pastiche blues. Michael Hanner's "Prowler" for Pharoah Sanders (the art) Playing is faultless, but so clean it lacks expressive pungency. Hymas's selection winds up as an amusing of trivia, like incidental music for a theatrical production. Rivers plays well, but with no one to match him emotionally, he too begins to sound gloomily and decoratively.

The booklet has watercolours by cartoonist Moebius. His revival of belle époque railway poster graphics is evidently meant to be smart and surreal — likewise, the music's decorated assembly of known techniques. There's sad romantic cello, quantum. Dodecaphonic corner, some idiosyncratic guitar, but nothing's pursued intently enough to achieve a technical breakthrough. It's a sequence of inert neoclassical panels. The already known without transformative or historical truth becomes merely decorative.

To see what this music lacks, compare Willem Breuker's use of similar materials, we hear savagery, frustration, spontaneity, bite.

Technical invention and social critique are close relations in music, and there's too little of that in Hymas to unleash the Sam Rivers we admire.

SEN WATSON

Steve Roden Crop Circles TRENTE CIGARETTE SOCIETY CD

It doesn't look promising to begin with. Los Angeles artist Steve Roden's Crop Circles was generated for an installation that formed part of a Malibu exhibition entitled *Why Come From Beyond*. The sleeve notes go on about the crop circle as "a trace an index of a presence unknowable".

Downplaying alien themes, however, the album functions like a piece of so-far benign active ambience. It is the first release in a new Trente Cigarette series entitled *Aménagement* (D'oiseaux [bird furniture]) which develops Sade's idea of furniture music — music that does not demand the full engagement of the listener.

Crop Circles is a 42 minute work made entirely from samples of a microphone interacting with a loudspeaker. The main components are high frequencies, a dominant scratching sound, distant clicks and a muffled, scratching hum that seems to represent the necessary figure of nearness.



EDITH FROST - TELESCOPIC

(Ding Ding)
Second fifth album from Irish Murphy Award Song Contest finalist and Ryan Bandwinner. It's a long time, "Telescopic" gets the info on the results but here it is, psychobilly, neo-noir, and very much "beyond".



BOXHEAD ENSEMBLE - THE LAST PLACE TO GO

(Mordant)
Magical ensemble project from members of Dirty Three, Death Cab For Cutie, Palace, The Drown Day and Edith Frost.



BARBARA MANNING - IN NEW ZEALAND

(Communion)
Big Manning's fourth novel with musical backing from Columbia and various New Zealand legends.



CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO - 12 DEGREES OF FREEDOM

(Ding Ding)
Both members of Chicago 27 and David Taylor (member of percussion — also, added by Jeff Parker of Fishbone) bring 27 home.



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soundcheck

The general mood and sound palette of the piece hardly vary but the various components are arranged in differing ways. Loops are used, but here Boden's not interested in repetition as rhythm. The aim is to create a shifting but consistent atmosphere within which the listener can go (loosely) about business. The feeling of continual change within narrow parameters succeeds in quietly engaging deep parts of the listener-attentive mind — the piece certainly makes good use of its sharply defined contours. A problem is that the key humming chord is too dependent on the form: too microtonal musical trope of the word. Menacing in a mild way in the end but it is a chair I'm not sure I want to sit in.

WILL PONTIGNERY

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Love Is the Devil OST
(SWEDECO, CD) LG

Leech Jankowski

Institute Bengentanta, OST
ATLAP (CONCRETE RECORDS) LG

It has to be said that *grrr* can be a tonic. I feared that Ryuichi Sakamoto was being coerced into a cut-throat of unbridled romanticism by cinema's current obsession with simplistic orchestral themes. His music was always romantic and melodic, but as his best on tracks like "Lost in Lagos" or "YMO's Happy End" he barbed romance with a neurotic, witchy edge.

John Maybury's *Love Is the Devil*, the story of Prince Buster's affair with faded singer George Dyer, is a gift for any composer obsessed with their hands bloody. Spooky, post-industrial. Electronics are its own evil and not do. The response of Bacon in his proximity to love (at least as portrayed by Maybury) is extraordinarily complex: absolute dominance yet a need for our domestic tenderness and psychological brutality. A rejection of Dyer in the present, a longing for him in the past. Bacon's most intense, sustained energies devoted to his portrayal of Dyer as a tortured figure of nightmare in paintings; the real Dyer more or less abandoned to actual nightmares. Finally abandoning himself to suicide in a Panaman hotel as his image is celebrated in a gleefully nearby.

What Sakamoto captures so beautifully with minimal means is the queasy proximity of this hopeless romance: the savage clash between non-ordinary love and the exorcism of those dark places where Bacon felt at peace while Dyer could only thrash in horror, drowning in drink and pills. All at sea in the wordless verbal ultraviolet of the Colony Club, strangled by love as he is being. Dyer's destruction is a collapse of grand and pathetic gesture. Meanwhile, Bacon paints with controlled fury: tongue lashes his body count; swims the sewers of the city; preens niggers and moves on.

So how to underscore all of this without

felling into typically Britney cinema clichés of post-apocalypse? Currently enamoured of noise, Ryuichi goes for grossly electric piano sounds and explosive electronics. This has two virtues, one for being unexpected, the other for being busy. Electronic noise has become the equivalent of the saxophone in free jazz: an awful lot of would-be musicians can approximate the effect but very few seem able to express more than the basic act of doing it. Clearly moved by the story's contradictions, the claustrophobia of its environment, Sakamoto draws on his experience as one of the pioneers of Electronics, conjuring up monstrous insectile worms of psychic terror, electric jolts of dislocation, floating bubbles of disturbed yearning, life double-distorted through a champagne glass and through Bacon's inner eye.

If Sakamoto's take on *grrr* is cool music concrete from the 1950s plunged into the concrete image wars of the late 1990s, Leech Jankowski's Polish perspective reminds me at times I'm also Toyah King. I too renewed enthusiasm in this issue of Dutch (too much, circa 1969-70), referred for the millennium with more subtle pokes and a darker sense of the absurdity of life. Maybe that makes it sound less than appealing, but it's absolutely captivating.

The Quay Brothers came across Jankowski when he was playing for a Polish theatre group called Teatr Ciepłota. Since then, he has composed for all their films. Inspired by a novel written by Swiss author and wanderer Robert Walser, Institute Bengentanta (subtitled *On The Dream People Call Human Life*) is the story of a boarding school for training saints. Jankowski's music cuts to the heart like a surgeon's knife, sleek, sun-flooded through light darkness, clatters and roars in numbingly chaotic or, in the case of "Thineat With Hydrophobia", in which a lone-patched trumpet blows its nose at trembling tones, constructs scenarios that are plain bizarre. Andrew Trzecek's cello, in particular, is stunningly beautiful, and the contrast between chorus and double bass on "Concrete Non-Infinitum" turned my expectations upside down: never to recover.

Though the soundtrack was composed between 1987 and 1991, a first listen suggests music that could have been created at any time in the past 30 years. Listen again however and there is too much awe and familiarity in Jankowski's powerfully odd juxtapositions for it to have been born in the awkward era of baroque hybrids such as poetry and jazz. This *Grosm* rock is the *Praxis* or *rap* rock. It is a dainty music, from Eastern Europe, steeped in jazz, folk, theatre music, and the more obscure branches of classical and ecclesiastical music. Jankowski's unselfconscious versatility is worlds apart from Ryuichi Sakamoto's traditional hyperbole of musical currents yet both are equally characteristic of the absolute now.

DAVID TROP

Urban Tribe

The Collapse Of Modern Culture
POLYGRAM LG CD 20 LP

Detroit has become so associated with Techno it's sometimes easy to forget that other forms of electronic dance music do occasionally emerge from the city. A collective including Carl Craig, Anthony Shook and Kenny Plodman (Dion, Sherard, Ingram's Urban Tribe project) uses the more fractured beats of *HeHoHo* and *Jungle* as the foundations on which to construct subtle abstract Electronics, which ironically has the classic offworld quality and air of melancholy currently missing from most Detroit Techno.

Recorded at Carl Craig's grandly styled Electronic Music Laboratory of Aural Sciences, the whole album reeks of technology, both in the track titles ("Up Top Industrial", and in the sounds themselves: the hollow drum is bass beats of "Genome Project" seem to dissolve before your ears as part of a kaiserisation process, while the strings, cuts, whirs and hisses that scurry across the monotonous sick of "Micro Machines" are the sounds of nanotechnology in action, sub-atomic mechanics going about their business.

As with any laboratory environment, the intrusion of external elements can upset the careful balance: the military strains that slice across "Sophistry" are reminiscent of pre-Consumer Electronics while the grubby drum clicks of "Pleasancism" recall Austrian. Overall though, this is a highly insular, almost hermetically sealed world, where the Detroit reference becomes as irrelevant as any geographical marker.

Urban Tribe both reflect and betray their name: this group of sonic nomads could emanate from any city, more likely they only exist in their own minds and those of the listeners.

PETER PHINNEY

Chris Watson

Outside The Circle Of Fire
TOUCH LG CD 37 CD

Play a few seconds of nearly any track on *Outside The Circle Of Fire* and it sounds like the freshest Techno disc ever. Take the third one against a backdrop of near silence, it alternates a semi-regular bouncing beat, a little scraping alien chirp and an occasional flurry of rapid-fire low rumbles. It's just the kind of rhythmic inversion Squarepusher or Aphex Twin would be proud to lay claim to. But when you look at the title — "Play Casperically Opposite" — you realise that this is in fact, as unopposed a disc as any they come. Watson has recorded 22 levels of animals and insects in the wild. Brought into attack range by Watson's close mic recording technique, hearing them is a startling experience.

Watson's last disc, *Stepping Into The Dark*, was all about sound environments and dense

textures, the one zero in on specific creatures for their alarming timbre and rhythm. What's surprising is that track after track is a killer by musical standards: check out the incredible tone of hippos wading out of the river. Those two birds in the Costa Rican rain forest are natural born duet partners. What amp does the chattering bird give the bobcat tree use? Are these male cockroaches signed to Warp or Sals? Watson's gone to some serious lengths to capture the stuff on tape and he's come up with sounds that most humans never get to hear. Endless leaping and other amazing. Circle Of Fire reveals new directions for mainstream music.

DOUGLAS WILK

Hal Willner

Whosop, 1. In An Indian
FUSHPOT RECORDS LG CD

It's hard to believe that this is a veteran US producer. Hal Willner's first solo LP. Harder still to imagine it coming out on a label like Howe B's Pusyloft, more usually associated with Tripping. But it was preceded earlier in the year by the low key release of a 12" under the name of Redbox. A collaboration between Howe B and Robbie Robertson, it was a clear indication of Willner's interest in roots-based American music. With Willner the impetus may well have been a shared love of plundering popular culture for their own musical ends. Whatever the reasons, the results are truly inspired: the best thing to come out on the label since Spooner's debut LP.

An object lesson in sonic collage for all those no-bell preachers who think it's cool to throw together two contrasting Blue Note samples. Willner brings together a collection of sound sources that define "ethnic" and "campy": Frankenstein-like a bewitching and twisted form from these wily diverse body parts. A barbershop into a live 'n' brimstone preacher and a Hawaiian (these all share disc space on the first track. And it just gets wilder. "Alamo Hellfire" sees African chants sporting until countered out by an orchestral version of "The Star Spangled Banner" which in turn skips out with some "Coconuts" before the whole lot are carried out of the ring to the tune of "Home On The Range".

What today's best merchandisers do with Samples, Willner does with whole cultures. Dotted across the sporadic dark beats and industrial drum 'n' less rhythms that at least partially anchor the disc in contemporary dance music, you'll find modern classical music, complex storytelling, Country & Western crows, US Army drill instruction, boogie woogie piano and 21st century Electronics. It's a magical mess of sound as album that should signal the death of lazy beat collage. Futurist it ends with a funeral dirge. All that one that stretches a 10m. Watch-like back across time, in the process connecting sci-fi atmospheres and ancient woodoo traditions.

PETER PHINNEY

in brief avant rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

Assembly Line People

Program Subdivision: Of Being
THEY (DGC, 1144002) CD

Dirt Nap

The Speed Of Sound
RESCUE (G) CD

The missing link between punk and Prog... think Pink Flou and uppers... Assembly Line People's Program disc is a dazzling display of speed and technique. Stuck in overtime they cram so much material into 33 minutes nobody leaves feeling shortchanged. For all their precision, however, the music is still really like listening to frenzied insects trapped in a jar.

Somewhat perversely, Dirt Nap forge a link between opposing tendencies: they balance the measured discipline of postmath-rock with the raw drive of hardcore. In both cases, discipline is the watchword, so I guess they have something in common. They top last year's noisy gut-driven vocals, ping additional layers of distortion on "Rescue"

Martyn Bates Imagination Feels

Like Pigeons (4/14 114002) CD

Milkshop Hollywood

Electric (WORLD CD)

En-Eyeless is Gaea balladeer Bates's new folk music: it so relies on studio arrangements, it comes out fully over-engineered. His declaratory vocals, accompanied by the simple strumming of a banjo, are drenched in echo and multitracked voices. Though the work comes straight from the heart doesn't make it any easier to like. Sincerity of conception can't compensate for its musical shortcomings.

The Milkshop Hollywood disc, featuring singer-songwriter Mara Flynn, arranged and augmented by Shmuddie boss Kramer, is abstract more successful. But for all the songs' lyrical flourishes, the project never quite comes to life. They can do frank confession ("Devils Advocate") and be lyrically disincarnate ("Hoboken Lament"), but when they try close word ("Companion"), it all goes pear-shaped.

Dirty Old Man River

The Saddle (Movie Screen) (BAMM, 1011) CD

Shiny Brides

Los Pollos Estrellas
GODD RECORDS (1141420) CD

The spirit of Nick Cave and The Birthday Party hovers over these albums. Featuring a rhythm section that plays like The Bad Seeds gone swamp rock and the beautiful, raved voice of Julian Mills, Dirty Old Man River puts a murky course from meandering ennui to unraveled tension. Mills's hoarse, expressive vocals make Tom Waits and Hank LaRocca

sound like chorboys, but somehow the songs lack the character to get up and walk away from the superficially impressive musical landscape they're embedded in.

Though they wear the same mask, Shiny Brides are distinguished by a harsher, simpler sound. Percussive bass powers their jangling rhythms, and a guitarist with James Williamson aspirations alternates jagged runs with atonal barrages of noise. Dane Hernandez's loose, semi-spoken vocals round out their low slung, sneering rock. The jazzy, muted guitar licks of "Hey Hey Romeo" and the intense minimalism of "Don't Sit On Me" take Shiny Brides into ultra-lo-fi, sleazy rock territory. Is that an upmarket shift, or are they slumming it? Depends which end of the swamp you come from.

Family Of God Atomic Little Thing

EP (GOD RECORDS) (1141420) CD

Family Of God's Chris Black and Adam Davis have often courted their eccentricity, but on this new single their unfettered eccentricity yields some good results. The title track is a jolly disposable bit of acoustic guitar pop, but things pick up with the ethno-electronica of "Sabine." The bizarre, loopy "Take The Hovers" is inspired lunacy... jodeling dig-dub melodrama is nothing if not novel. Just like their subject, they take a stumble with "Electric Bill," an unfunny stab at Bill Clinton, left behind by recent events at the White House.

Karda Extra's Winter In Summer

Time (1141420) CD

Richard Weisman and Jennifer Bailey's neo-classical soundtrack mixes toots, samples and orchestral arrangements. The music would probably sound fine with film images, but as a listening experience it fails to engage. Then again, it's none too clear exactly what kind of film the music suits. When they're not humming it up with Hammer Horror theatrics, their lush arrangements get horribly close to pompous, symphonic rock.

King Missile III

Feature
SHARP (DGC, 1141420) CD

Rooney Time On Their Hands

Common Culture (RECORDS) (1141420) CD

Forsoaking straight lyrics for a more dense interweaving of rock and spoken word, King Missile III's intentions are clearly satirical. They're just as clearly not very good. I can take asshole, but King's Hall's blunt prose is just asinine. "Failure is not out to fuck

you/failure words you to fuck it/it to fuck it all "Up My Ass" is Hall's smug attempt at South Park-style scatological humor.

That narrative songs can work is proven by Paul Rooney's fascinating lo-fi collection. He simply describes scenes, often from photographs, without judgment or metaphor. In fact, it's more anti-narrative than story song, with the music acting as a frame around their stark content, yet it's never less than fascinating.

Kreidler Coldness

EP (1141420) CD

Pram Sleepy Sweet

CD (1141420) CD

Obviously the most modern of post-rock groups, Kreidler succumb to the retro virus on the vocal mix of "Coldness" opening this single. Its Germanic vocals and pulsating melodic synths immediately recall Krautrock. It might not be the most accurate representation of Kreidler's capabilities, but as electropop it's compulsive enough. The rest more readily conforms to type, particularly the instrumental squish closing the CD version.

For all their supposed postmodern fixations, Pram are more obviously musical antiquarians.

"Sleepy Sweet" adorns a silky keyboard melody underlaid with some light crooning. Once processed through Pram's patented noisier-retro sound, its "Version" acquires a lovely kick and favour.

Brian Lockin & John French

Runaway Mind (TRAM) (1141420) CD

Landis Yearner Day's Tomorrow

Turns Out To Be No Future At All (MIND) (1141420) CD

As belts their beefhearted communion, Lockin and French make intriguing use of found sounds and field recordings, particularly on "Laguna Gate," which samples and loops a noisy gate hinge to hypnotic effect, and the semi-abstract drone and narrative of "Anna Of The Five Towns." But to get at them you have to ride out low culture guitar jactances like "Spooky Hot Rod" and "Seagulls West." Landis also offers experimental

waywardness with more straightforward pieces. Their album begins promisingly with a pair of guitar-based space-rockers, before coming back to earth with a whimper. Incoherently interesting instrumentals relieve the tedium of their unremarkable songs.

Mirza Iron Compass

Flux (MIRA) (1141420) CD

Time Control

ROSA (1141420) CD

Although their men deal it's still raw

psychedelia. Mirza have sent their music loose from their guitar-bleated last album Andromed. The driving percussion and

metallic sheets of noise are still intact, but they're offset by atmospheric dissonance, abstract soundscapes and a more varied range of guitar styles.

Time Control's Japanese space rock takes off on waves of analogic synth noise and strict, motorik dissonance. Between the four originals and two remakes, there is not a lot of variety, predictably enough. Trance rhythm monotony is effective in the short term, but it wears off over the distance.

The Pastels Illuminati

Remixes (1141420) CD

These days, anyone who stands still long enough qualifies for the full four star remix treatment. Scottish indie perennial The Pastels get theirs from a truly impressive cast, including Cornelius, To Rococo Rot, Mouse On Mars, John Mellencamp, Kevin Shields and Jim O'Rourke. Though they're subjected to such a slurry blizzard of tricky edits and loops, Pastels' elements remain surprisingly identifiable through a good two thirds of the cuts. Highlights include Cornelius's dreamlike "Windy Hill," Mouse On Mars's aged-sound collage of "Atic Plan" and Third Eye Foundation's subterranean "On The Way."

Scala To You In Alpha

100 Miles (1141420) CD

Former Seefeel members Daniel Seymour and Sarah Peacock pass on the socially acceptable lurid song option of "The Ship" and alternate through into a murky world of machine-driven grooves. The low of dense industrial beats is disrupted by the odd jangling blast of brutal guitar minimalism. "Gait" is like a hybrid of Spacemen 3's "Revolution" and Tricky's sneering of "Black Steel."

Sophia The Infinite Circle

Now (1141420) CD

It would be easy to dismiss Sophia as part of the new mezzobell trend, when in truth their melancholia runs a whole lot deeper. The infinite Circle is one of those morbidly catholic records that breathe the line between holiness and pathos, courageously making inroads as singer Robin Prosser-Shepherd imposes the lived emotions at his core.

Spiritualized Royal Albert Hall

October 1997 Live (1141420) CD

This live recording puts the seal on Jason Pierce's pact with 'authenticity,' symbolised by his privileging of slide guitar over effects pedals. The presence of brass and gospel choir further authenticates their RBB leanings, and a triumphant rock gospel reading of "Oh Happy Day" closes the set. Though it's undeniably thrilling, you can't help wondering how Pierce gets away with indulging in the end of rock, not in orthodox others have been roundly pilfered for.

in brief classical

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

William Brueker Psalm 122

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

Martin Butler O Rto/Fixed

Don't Bute's msc 01114 cd

Brueker claims to write "music for human beings," but you don't have to hear his work for it. His settings of Old Testament texts celebrating the true believer's journey to Jerusalem pile up strings, choir, jazz ensemble, narrator and even a barrel organ in a succession of sober pleasures that seem interminable. Well-memorized but ponderous, this impacts all the heartiness and good cheer of a carol bar. (Were also the composer who speaks of the "playful nature of the music in general." No good will ever come of it.)

Martin Butler's *Fixed Double* puts the BBC Symphony Orchestra through a short musical homage to Stravinsky, but the Brazilian cymbal myths and Latin American dance rhythms of *Do Ro* are a just too charming to rise much of a sweat.

Coventry/York/Butterfly

Tingetarts c/cv recs c/cv004 cd

Ensemble Duckamp Exant

Don't Bute's msc 01114 cd

These two CDs make a point of letting you know they were recorded live: in one take and without overdubs or editing. Are they boasting or apologizing ahead? Chances are may sometimes pass for honesty but it is no guarantee of quality. Kenny Coventry (on piano) trumpet and electronics leads percussionist Coach York and double bassist Patrick Butterfly through seven delicately muted free-form compositions. Full of dark cocktail lounge shyness, this music should be playing in the background during an Irish Aron disaster movie as the moment the dire warnings are made and tragedy looms. Tasteless!

Invoking Marcel Duchamp that most poisonous snake in the modernist garden is dangerous enough naming your project after one of its crudest conceptual stunts is just plain bankers' Unperturbed. The Ensemble Duckamp features an unusual combination of oboe and tuba, neither of which carry a particularly striking range. One piece, complete with alto sax is called "On the Oboe Or Not? Yeah."

Marzio Gallego Soloway's Pur

Widowhood Used X/Janet writes a

knows 010101 cd

In a combination of Writer & Writer's single-handed effort to show the classical establishment how unimaginative it become, this disc offers a fresh view of

German conceptualist Kagel. Four marvelous organ pieces transcribed for loamy accordion lead off this collection. Kagel operates at the hot zone between notated organization and improvisation, and on the double keyboard piece *A Dear Hans, Teodoro Anzures* and *Luk Vales* play as if the music were flowing through their fingers for the first time. MP 5.1's film music patchwork uses an audible click track — a metronome whose remorselessness drives the parcel to a Ground Zero-style yelping frenzy. Highly recommended. (Rob Young)

Zhou Long The Ineffable GUA

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

A member of the Chinese "Barok Generation" who found in the Hungarian composer's musical voice a means of overcoming the heavy burden of the Cultural Revolution, Zhou Long's compositions grasp the imagination and won't let go. The *Invincible*, his 1994 score for 21 string, zongzi, four string piano, flute, violin, cello and percussion is a work of tremendous subtlety and power. The following four works are for a range of instruments, from solo cello to brass quintet, all of them characterized by the composer's boldness of purpose.

Thanos Mikroutsikos Slow

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

Thanos Mikroutsikos was Greek. He died of cancer from 1994 to 1996. However every note of his 1992 *Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra* sounds like they have accepted the post on his behalf. Two other pieces sound a little more free, especially *Slow Moon* — a constantly undulating drop of strings which holds back any sunrise or edge until the last few bars when the melody is quietly sent off into the ether.

Arvo Pärt Sanctuary VIRGO CLASSICS

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

Born in 1933, Estonian composer Arvo Pärt managed to survive the storms and stresses of both Stalinism and socialism, only to find himself in a troubled period in the 1970s when he wrote virtually nothing. But during this period he discovered a new compositional style, which he named "tintinnabuli," after its affinity with bell overtones. *Confiteor* in *Memory of Benjamin Britten* (1977) for string orchestra and bell is the earliest and freshest example of his highly personal musical vision. Unrelieved by such notes as rhythmic density, Pärt's heavily choral progressions quickly put becoming louder and sonoric. For true believers only.

Quartetto Borciani Razzmatazz

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

Tomoko Mukaiyama Hello

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

Performing works specially written for them by new Italian composers. The Quartetto Borciani seem genuinely absorbed in the demands made upon them. Or maybe they're just being polite. However, from the busy mechanisms of Luigi Crebelli's *Futuro ispirato* to *Luci* — On the medieval fantasy of Paolo Hologno and Marco Rosato's *Caucaso*, there's nothing here that would feel out of place in the soundtrack for a TV documentary. The title *Razzmatazz* says it all: attention grabbing but lightweight, snarling but unannounced.

Tomoko Mukaiyama's choice of American piano works by the likes of Ives, Cowell, William Bolcom and John Zorn is an intriguing one but her execution lacks focus. Maybe it was just poorly recorded, for the overall performance sounds muffled and lacking in dynamics, which is a great pity. The title piece, written for Mukaiyama by David Draper in 1991, a best avoided unless you are particularly keen to tried extracts of the kind that Frank Dickens used to do a bit better more than a decade ago.

Raymond Scott Tremendous Nights

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

You get the old *Big Band* out and bang it a bit. Rhythm machine combined round the time these recordings were made, "and then you have those Oriental figures over it, and there you have what Scott calls an experiment in modern jazz." The only two words in this poor reviewer's imagination grip that need concern us here are experiment and modern. Originally recorded in 1952 and just recently rereleased, this collection of tracks recorded by Raymond Scott's six man quartet between 1937-39 displays such stark intellectual wit and gleeful invention that it all takes the breath away. Linking Raymond Scott to John Cage via Duchamp, this is programme music gone berserk, a textual formula worked out in the strictest formalist terms, so you get yodelling bagle calls on "Boy Scout in Switzerland" and spectral party squakers on "New Year's Eve in a Haunted House." As a pure musical expression of thought it remains without equal, but who's with the six man quartet? Scott thought it sounded better.

Roger Sessions The Piano

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

The Sylvan Winds Plays

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

An American academic composer with heart and mind rooted in German musical styles. Sessions wrote music that was dense, dissonant and rhythmically complex more in tune with Schoenberg's romantic expressionism than Webern's robust expressionism. Recorded mostly over a series of

concerts given by his former pupil Robert Hells, the CD release contains three piano sonatas dating from 1930 to 1965 together with *From My Diary* a sequence of four short pieces written between 1937 and 1940. This is a very amusing set performed with unerring care and attention. Particularly haunting is *Sorcerer's No 3* subtitled "In Memoriam Nov 22 1963" which evokes the Kennedy assassination not as a violent individual death but as a complex human event. Dignified, civilized and humane.

Drawing almost entirely on work from the 1980s, The Sylvan Winds come perilously close to embodying some of the temble, honeyed tones Charles Ives used to convey with the word "noir." While Bruce Adolph's *Chorismos* for double and quartet holds a tough emotional core beneath its shilling layers of sound. Three *Wood Sketches* by George Tompkins fizzes and bubbles away to no useful effect whatsoever. Summertime by David Chalton starts off seductively with clarets played in unison but lacks any range or depth — remarkable for a work featuring 23 instruments, all of which get to play. It's left to Allen Ellis's 1958 *Concerto for Violin and Wind Quintet* written for Hungarian virtuoso Gabriel Barenboim to add a little Cold War snap and vigour to an otherwise lackluster selection.

Viktor Ullmann Der Kaiser Von Atlantis

2008 90601-21 74570001 D

The moment the German army occupied the remains of Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939, Viktor Ullmann, a composer whose work had been honoured at festivals in Britain and Switzerland the previous summer, was transformed into a subhuman creature with barely five years left to live. Deported to Theresienstadt, a model ghetto, little better than a concentration camp, Ullmann continued to work, organising concerts. He also collaborated with the young Expressionist poet and painter Fritz Kern on the one act opera *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis*. This chilling *Music for the dark ages* tells how the Emperor of Atlantis insists upon waging one bloody war after another until Duchamp "warned of it all" decides to go on strike. The sufferings of those who cannot die are so terrible however that the Emperor eventually agrees to become the *Gen Reapier* at first sight, if only Death will return to work. Filled with the bleakest sarcasm and the darkest poetry this mordant pantomime on late romantic themes has a furious energy coiled up at its heart. Ullmann's score is both sparse and dense, blending parodies of Haydn and Mahler with *Impassioned* declamations and demagogic rhythms. Imagine *Reverend Lutzerath* written by Alfred Jarry. Unfortunately, neither Ullmann nor Kern ever got to see their work performed. They were murdered at Auschwitz in October 1944.

in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Mark B & Blade Nobody

Relatives/Mix & Soulville jazz/ROCK
1991/12

This 12" is a sort of records. Brian Hip-hop that actually makes it on the strength of the MC as well as the production. His rhymes are hardly mind-boggling, indeed they are too literal, but unlike almost of his countrymen, MC Blade manages to compress the Queen's English into Hip-hop's deceptively strict rhythmic framework. He does get some help from Mark B's line beat construction on "Nobody Relaxes" whose groove is based on a nasty string and keyboard loop that would get anyone's head nodding.

Si Begg/Al People B Boy Of

Tonitron/Saw/Hell/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

More than Begg's Thelma era nostalgia from the Underground/Dubbox. Si Begg's "B Boy Of Tonitron" is actually the B-boy of yesterday, it sounds like any three song triplet of New York's Kiss FM circa 1983 when D-Tribe, Man Parrish and UFO were all part of the same lush groove. When the sources are this good, who cares about the lack of originality? Al People's "Saw/Hell" is no less of a remembrance of things but it uses a filter or two to suggest a bit of sleek modernity.

DJ Faust, Shortee & Craze

Fathomless/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

This headbanger featuring the South's best DJ crew on it immediately sinking, but then halfway through the Junglist track "Fartage" you realize that the duo's beats are exactly made up of scratches and you think "Manque Gelson, eat your heart out. In fact, it is so impressive that you're willing to forgive the fact that some of the EP is as overbearing and post-industrial Gothic as a bad record. Even though it has every sound ever recorded at its disposal, turntablistism is still constrained by its very limited sound palette.

DJ Seud & Christoph Fringelli

Bodystan/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Seud & Nonex Total

Death/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

As producers D's theories and fornicate editors DJ Seud and Christoph Fringelli are the real broadcast extremes. Harder, faster, louder than anything else around the "Bodystrong" 12" and "Total Destruction" embody art as collage and rhythm as punishment. Emerging from the free party scene where pure visceral nose seems to

be appreciated more than anywhere else these records have moments of feedback without that border on Boyd Rice territory but are constructed with a sense of rhythm and an awareness of texture - something like Muzak Aka in an Afro and hot pants. The Bodystrong EP makes any pretence of Ed Rush and Qapical as hard men seem laughable, while "Total Destruction" sounds like a Sam Peckinpah film breaking out at a reggae dancehall. When the US Army wanted to get Manuel Noriega out of his bunker, this is what they should have played. *A+ review*

Adam F Brand New Funk

RECORDS/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

The drum is a bass record of the year finally gets a full release. Taking to life and PKO from the Godfather "Brand New Funk" is comprised of a well-worn triplet from Rhythm Heritage's "Theme From SWAT" a mammoth breakdown featuring Spoonie Gee and a blastoff finale that collapses into a grinding, unrelieved baseline and taking tremors drums. A diamond call for the funk to return to the Jungle, or vice versa.

The Isolationist Hydrogen

Slush/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

This collaboration between DJ Vadim, NYC rapper Anti-Pop Consortium and Scratch Pervin DJ Primeaux treats your ears as its punching bag. Dark and moody production and some fine karate chop scratching set the scene for the rapist, almost rhythmic flow of PMS, Prett, Bears and H Sayo. As clear as the Anti-Pop Consortium are, it's Vadim's ultra minimal production that steals the show. Less the best thing he's been involved with for a very long time.

Jeep Beat Collective For Jims

Heads/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Escrowing the party tracks collected on Assorted/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK. The Rufi Jeep Beat Collective attempts to move into DJ Shadow territory by trying to give breaks and beats an emotional weight. Unfortunately, he tends to slip into the sub-Panorahed region by forcing the beats and pieces into an emotive structure rather than letting them do the work for him. For Jims Hendrix is much better when the Rufi isn't trying to be so productive, instead letting his Technics do the talking.

Jungle Brothers Decause I Got

It Laid That on Street/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Originally intended for release ten years ago but shelved until now, the Ultimate

mix of this old school classic features the beat from ELO's "Don't Bring Me Down" below some ska guitars. Any record that can find the connections between Jeff Lynne, Laurel Aitken and The Jungle Brothers deserves your attention. The new Deadly Jive/Jeep mix is based around some schlocky soundtrack stuff and is just too busy to succeed, although the doubletime cuts-Jungle section is pretty nifty. The Freshly's try to pull an Afrocase and fail fairly comprehensively. All the modern trickery can't disguise the fact that the original based on a Sly Stone calypso groove is still the best.

Jurassic 5 Concrete Schoolyard

RECORDS/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

The Thermodynamic reaction to Hip-hop's bloated materialism continues apace with this glorious renaissance of Old School pleasures like strolling the stop talking the, imitating the Harlem Globetrotters in the schoolyard, and cranking up a Good Times and Hong Kong Phooie "Proton" by the cover of a book and beats. Jurassic 5 aren't afraid to sound more like The Furious Five than Funky Daddy's Jew and that piano loop is as unashamedly nostalgic as an episode of *Fat Albert*. The second CD has the bonus of Cat Chems's brilliant funny, dapper character "Lasson 6. The Lecture" and the fine new track "Rubber Ties".

Mike Ladd Blah Blah

ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Just as turntablists have taken DJing to its very limits the new wave of Hip-hop-influenced pop-performers have taken MCing just about as far as it can go, at least in terms of sheer density. "Blah Blah" and "Welcome To The Afterlure" are both packed datastreams of multisyllables and wordplay for wordplay's sake that are as hard to penetrate and alienating as one of Lord Sutra's ultra minimal post-jazzing routines. Like these poetry-dense grooves, Saul Williams' recent 12" is really the music - offbeat rhythms, mean and moody beats that push this wordsmith's record over.

oB O Looks/Fat Canal

ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Abandoning his occasionally by jazz tendencies, oB's Allen Rad has crafted an emotionally minimal 12" that still manages to be sleeky. "1-Looks" has a vaguely Eastern European cello weaving its way through synch loops, while "Fat Canal" is basically a wah-wah guitar riff that wants to be a Jeff Mills filtered synth pattern.

Rancho Relaxo Allstars Live: A

Live Parades/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

After Duque and his associated band of weirdos return to their country retreat and ride their horses into a Phosphorescent sunset. Bearing little relation to the cowpoke shenanigans of the cover art and

accompanying booklet, the music made by Duque and sidekick Mike Vaino Taylor Despres, Dierich Schoeneman, Jim Tenor, John Selway, Jochen Reiter and Pruzic is quiet, considered Electronic bursting with wit, textual tone and Creepiness on the inside, mediating bits of much Ambient music. Rancho Relaxo Allstars try to make you feel as quirky as they can without grossing you out. Creepy voices whisper about you in the background, a Spanish speaking shill tries to sell you a potion that will improve your sexual potency, icy shimmering synths a la John Carpenter make you think somebody's stalking you. *Live At Live Parades* reminds me of the Kids In The Hall sketch where, after a bender, one teenager are talking and moving really slowly to try to freak out their lover friend and make him go home. More evil than Huxley.

Semiconductor Vs

Disastronaut Music Is Taping

Home Killing/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

More than Begg's Thelma era nostalgia from the Underground/Dubbox. Si Begg's "B Boy Of Tonitron" is actually the B-boy of yesterday, it sounds like any three song triplet of New York's Kiss FM circa 1983 when D-Tribe, Man Parrish and UFO were all part of the same lush groove. When the sources are this good, who cares about the lack of originality? Al People's "Saw/Hell" is no less of a remembrance of things but it uses a filter or two to suggest a bit of sleek modernity.

Titonon Duvarné

Avoneros/Avoneros 2000 BLACK

BLACK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

More inescapable warm Techno from Ohio's Titonon Duvarné. His basslines suggest that, like almost every American involved with Techno and House, he's a Prince wannabe, but the sounds really fly. Any hint of subtly totemic alien status hidden behind pulsating grooves, gorgeously loud and vibrant synth colours and the most highly developed funk sensibility of anyone in Techno Saw Juan Atkins.

Transient Waves Born With A

Body And Fucked In The Head

ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK/ROCK
1991/12

Formerly with the very eclectic, Darka Records in San Francisco, Transient Waves specialize in a kind of organic Ambient groove that is less somewhere between U2 and Throes "Born With A Body And Fucked In The Head" transmutes from the kind of funk played by Germans with pudding-pot horncuts and three-inch thick specs to an urban underbelly gamelan with incoherent vocals from an on-musical exotic and back again. The remix by Two Love Swadonen and Spike echo focus on one half and don't really go anywhere.

in brief electronica

Reviewed by **Matt fytche**

A Certain Frank Nobody? No!

(ATM, 95751 CD)

Kammerflimmer Kollektief

4 Stages/editions. Dior Blues Ltd

Ein Stück EP. NAYLA HO. MARSCH 0212

A Certain Frank is the Düsseldorf group

formed by two former members of the witty

ultracool group Der Plan, namely Frank

Ferschlacher and Kurt Dahlke, aka

Pyrolator, who released some fine solo

albums circa 1980. The first track has an

amazing zest to it — the kind of full-on lo-fi

could sound reminiscent of 60s German

collectives like Amon Düül, all drums, organ

and fuzzy vocals. The rest floats somewhat

uncertainly between breezy jazz songs and

more heavyweight electronic rhythms, with

Latin percussion and waves thrown in

the Kammerflimmer Kollektief love post-
rock, Electronica and improv into all
directions. Their instrumental drums and
central European folk songs on vocals and
edges are stretched in probing tracks. A kind
of European downhome No Wave

Eralde Bernocchi/Bill

Lawsell/Mick Harris' Veve

reintroduces CD

Long after religion has fled from the world

it will find a home in dark Ambient. CDs: Bill

Lawsell's bass always seems to come with

some courier-enlightenment message

attached. This time it's woodoo. The

Bernocchi/Lawsell/Harris trio works rather

well — so much so their get-togethers are

becoming increasingly regular. Harris and

Bernocchi both supply beats and electronic

treatments, and Lawsell presides as usual

with his impressively controlled bass vocals.

To forecast the grand gaudy finale this

could so easily become, the trio pines back

on all fronts. The result is understated and

classical/poetic, nothing too fiery (apart

from Bernocchi's occasional derisions on

disordered guitar), with shimmering sub-bass

drums imploding into dark electronic

spirals with the odd eerie chant waiving

over the top

Don't! Dolby Don't! Dolby 05

05/RENTROD CD

Noto Kertész LP/LUNGHO CD

To confront their own personal secrets both

these Germans — Nobis Carsten Nicolai

and the unnamed Don't! Dolby — hammer

down in the cooques of their private chat,

extending the large and hybrid covers of

their respective machinery. Heri Dolby turns

in a magisterial debut for Jan Werner's

Gelheim label, about as good as the school

of live, chattering drones and loops gets. The

six tracks are backlit with gently modulating

whistlers, the inexpressible and comforting

whirr of a film projector, swimmers at

disk, or the soughing of a distant Tiger Moth.

'Corrosion' has the ferret quality of a

drunkens poem by Vaniclav or Various

Artists, only made with cheaper equipment

(LP run-out grooves, thinned eraser on a

bleed-skip), a synthesized spine that sounds

like it's being caressed with an E-bow

Noto's noises on *Kerne* when they are

audible at all, are so divorced from any

source we're used to calling an instrument

that you have to look to the secret music of

the body to describe them: whorls in the

mouth, the ticking of the heart, and the

knocking of cartilage-disked bones

frayed or not, the surgical Electronics

heart beats stronger than the buried flutters

of Bernhard Guter or Francisco Lopez

(Rox Young)

ForK Autocrypt 00-ADCA0721 CD

Slingswrench Proloa vol.10/NOISE

CONSUMPTION NUMBER 10

Though it sitters straight into a Triphop

coast with slow sliding beats, hovering

chords and digital nodules, Autocrypt turns

out weeder than you expect. One track is

made up of tapspins and buzzes, while the

long endpiece may have scratched a sample

from Steve Rocco's preacher tapes of

Brother Walter. Generally sparse in tone, it

learns more towards clicks, cracks and pulses,

but it maintains enough of a drone to give a

space melodic ambience. The music never

particularly takes off anywhere, nor could

you lose yourself in it.

Slingswrench describe their music as

"reversing force venting symphonic, pill

chords, impulses laced with psychotic

rhythms." Jason Shephard's grooves

certainly have an overdone feel, its

stuttering rhythms and sequences are driven

by piston-like beats. Except that it appears to

blow a fuse. Meanwhile everything

underneath is nerved in smoothly bracketed

with the usual intro and outro vocovers. Big

noise rhythms with a glossy undercarriage

The Clifford Gilberto Rhythm

Combination 1 Was Young And

I Needed The Music 14 Junk

CLASSICS MUSIC LINE 2001 CD

San Electric Via Nostra Apollo

Hermano Ltd

Like Funky Porcum, Clifford Gilberto sits out

that Napa Tune sub-category of warm jazz

grooves spaced with often whimsy snap-

beats. The supply of this stuff appears to be

endless — hence the "14 Junk Classics"

tagline. Well, one or two stand out as

genuinely catchy. Otherwise take your pick of

Latin rhythms, cool sax rehearsed funky jazz

grooves, with or without programmed

beats or swishing ride cymbal. Stick them on

the jukebox and wriggle your toes

San Electric's Max Thiel and Tom

Loderbauer hook back to the sound of Alex

Pavlenko and The On the way 90s. Their

warm bass and drum grooves feel lush

Amble Techno. For all its bright and

breezy, even kitschy tunes a la Max Brenner,

this is a bit complacent for my liking. Denver

Techno with pellets on target, a couple of

tracks coiled round tighter. Electro loops

explain why somewhere along the line

they've been compared to Kraftwerk

Neil Landstrum Pro Audio

TRICOR N.J. CD

Spare but engaging Techno from Edinburgh

exile Neil Landstrum, now based in New

York. Perhaps it's a better launchpad for his

last dystopian music, it's muffled, abrasive

bass beats, relentless, punting rhythms, raspy

space, winning beats, processed vocals and

mechanical gapping whirrs. Pro Audio charts

a grayscale of rhythmic pulses, where

strenuously mutates into implacably steady

pulses and mechanical heartbeats while

visual input seeps out of the system in

space processed mornings, like a toxic gas

escaping into the ozonephere. Two thirds of

the way through he breaks through the

rhythmic barrier into a textural bleep world

where he freefalls in a Rhythmic bleep world

Pulses dissolve into distorted phone

conversations that break into spirals of noise,

triggering a freiform exploration of textures

littered from single synth notes

Kouhei Matsunaga Upside

DOREN MUSIC / JAPANESE RECORDS CD

A blend of the industrial and the ritual is

achieved on the opening track by mixing

Buddhist drones and whappings with dull,

exhausting pulses and grating lo-fi ambience.

The sense of a dejected spirituality is

reminiscent of *Nyctem* — a temple at the

heart of a gloomy nightworld, though here

the ominous drumming, strings and chimes

are cut to hazy electronic sounds. But its

never-ending exorcism of ghosts doesn't

quite come to focus. However, "Two Foot

And Two Hand" has a dreamy intensity, its

lyrics sustained by brooding thunder

And the final track, "Rise", written with

Merobius' Mitsuo Arita, is an intriguing

departure for both artists, its short repeating

loop of tormented strings leads into a Bang-like

string quartet overlaid with foreboding

electronic catenings

Pete Namlook/Lakoff/Ign Ver

Planetarium FAX and NOISE CD

The soft rumbling drone and spacey zooms

and whines in the background promise an

hour of intergalactic Ambient travel from

Namlook and St Petersburg artists Lakoff and

Ign Ver, aka New Composers. But their vessel

soon finds itself becalmed in space. Long

floating, electronic drones (slightly ponderous

at times) and glossy synth chords carry that

favour of stasis and mystique accomplished by

side two of Bowie's Low. Optional extras

include the BBC-style vociferous coming on

like a bedtime story from God. And no

Ambient ship at night would be complete

without those occasional wavelike twinkling

spargles. Set the controls for the dringly deli

at the heart of the cosmos

Scanner Sound For Spaces

0054 SM 119 CD/UP

The collection of mostly sea specific music

created for sound symposia, radio projects

and touring installations goes right back to

one of Scanner's earliest pieces — a

timebased set of Reichian tape loops from

1984. Much of it consists of hypnotic loops

of lifting, low key ambience, not dissimilar

to the early work of J.D. Comptel. But

where the latter's primitive tongue

textures are more melodically based.

Scanner's work seems to spring from a

forensic of everyday atmospheres. He says

he work is based on memory, and you can

get the sense he is attempting to coax a

hypnotic half-life out of the barely

detectable presences that inhabit a space

almost like the faint traces of unrecorded

acts that might drift to the carpet and walls

of an abandoned room. A 15 minute

recording of a Beckett monologue deserves

a separate mention, where delicate

reverbations curling round the speech

chain fruitfully with the tape's own

exploration of non-sleep

Träffante Is This Now A Warm One

RENTROD CD

SETI Live Rostock & Berlin 20/21

Feb 1998 seti's warm vibes CD

What with the artwork, human chat

between and surveillance — familiar themes

for the auteur here, Richard J Kirk —

Träffante's dark Techno tastes off the

ubiquitous skittering beats for a slower,

ploughing rhythmic drift. There's a nice

emphasis on bass sounds, whether hums or

drums or muffled throbbing pulses.

Repeating loops and pulses give a hypnotic

edge, while muddy processed vocals and

occasionally tiny synth chords recall early

Techno. Its soot, though, is by the

introduction of nine keyboard scales here

and there

Recorded live and laid out in one long

stretch, Rostock & Berlin is a limited edition

release from Andrew Lakoff. It's a rather

dry, skerry Techno — minimal bass, dry

background drones and timeless whistlers,

echoey jingles and odd fragments of speech

though it arches over the space of an hour, it

has little to offer other than a sombre chilled

galactic void

in brief global

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

Remedios Amaya *Me Voy Contigo* (PINEAPPLE) 124 349614 CD
A tropical element helps define the latest Remedios Amaya CD, a singer whose popularity in Spain reflects a degree of renaissance. She has smoothed some of the sharp edges, but the core of tradition is preserved in her vocal singing. Vicente Amey's guitar accompaniment assumes freedom to cross conventional boundaries but his jazzy inflections are tempered with real flamenco fire. Some duets may have occurred in the course of modernisation, but this still shoulders its time-honoured falson.

Yossi Arnheim/Yair Dalal/Amir Massarik/Chen Zimbalist *Sheshesh* (NAXA) 10108 000004 CD
An Israeli ensemble comprising flute, oud, double bass and percussion. Sheshesh celebrates folk traditions of the Middle East, fused through elegant compositions and arrangements.

The source materials, ranging geographically from Morocco to Tadjikistan, are handled with evident respect, but the polite formality of the group's execution leads to level differences: the performances are undoubtedly immaculate, but the polish tends to obliterate the graininess which preserves much of the distinctive character of folk materials.

Dade Krama *Ancestral Dances* (ROUND MUSIC) 800601 CD
Dade Krama is a pan-African music ensemble whose reputation has been established across Europe through their dynamic concert appearances. It was affiliated with the album *Ancestral Music Of Africa* and its sequel sustains the momentum through a series of seductive performances. Intricate percussive patterns mesh readily with a range of acoustic instruments (picked, blown and bowed) and highly affecting voices. The usual adjectives – vibrant, infectious, dynamic, restly do apply in this instance.

DZM Project/Madosini Power *The Women* (HEAT) 2006 86 108 CD
This is a mighty recording. Madosini Power was born in South Africa's Eastern Cape. She makes and plays simple instruments (like a haps and moutbowl), writes haunting songs and delivers them with a voice of fragile yet defiant beauty. Here Dade Pokuas and Mowende Qosini from the group Amampodas have collaborated on arrangements, enhancing Madosini's parts with additional percussions, chants and

ululations. Their superb work in the studio produces electrifying results. Hypnotic from start to finish, *Power To The Women* begins the most basic means to an end that is simply spellbinding. Gung'uma's two dub mixes work well enough, but seem superfluous on an album that so perfectly stakes out its own timeless domain. Essential.

Faraña *Nemecio Infusion* (HISMAI) CD
Ten years on, it seems that Faraña are still best known for their artistically successful collaboration with trumpeter Jon Hassell on *Fish Of The Spirit*. Without the heavyweight interventions of Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois that shaped *Fish*, the ensemble appears rather less arty – and a lot more fun. Nemecio was recorded in Swaziland, and features guest musicians Thierry Van Roy on keyboards and E-bow guitar, and Dominique Mollet on acoustic and electric bass. For Africa's characteristic instrumentation foregrounds the mymba-bile balala, which lends itself well to sympathetic interaction with live-in instruments. Kora overblows inject extra buoyancy. Only one of the 13 songs lasts more than four minutes. The result is a warm sound, relaxed yet immediate.

Garmarna Gude Spoleman (ROUND) 800713 CD
Triakel *Triakel* (SOURCE) 800121 CD
Storytelling is a strong element of Scandinavian folk music, and there is a distinct narrative dimension to the work of Garmarna and Triakel. Emma Herdén sings with both Garmarna veers towards the rock and end of the folk rock spectrum, occupying roughly the same ground as June Tabor with *The Oyster Band*. Herdén sounds clear, electronic effects add an air of menace, while English translations disclose sagas of trials and reverses, hunger and loss. Her voice sounds much sweeter in the folk context of Triakel, where she is matched with a simple yet highly effective combination of lute and harmonium. No longer forcing a boisterous bark, her singing assumes equal value as an instrument. No translations here, but the music is considerably more rewarding.

Carmen Gonzalez & Koral Y *Esmeralda* (Andarile) 1001 1001 CD
The province of Esmeraldas lies on the Pacific Coast of Ecuador. Here, the indigenous culture has entered easily into an amalgam with both African and Hispanic traditions. This CD celebrates that blending. It is also a

showcase for the aptly vocalising of Carmen Gonzalez, fronting the Afro-Latin ensemble she founded. Tracks are interspersed with low definition recordings of local people and their environment which ringling in their relative incoherence accentuate the well-aware theatricality of Koral's music.

Busi Mhlongo *Gibizibulu* (HEAT) 2006 86 118 CD
Busi Mhlongo is a gifted singer on anyone's terms, and on *Gibizibulu* she leaves no doubt who is calling the shots. She has appropriated Maskanda, the music of South Africa's Zulu miners, to create a set of songs that advances celebration of contemporary Zulu culture into wholly new regions. Maskanda has been basically music for male voice and concertina. Mhlongo's own impassioned singing incorporates mimicry of macho gruffness and soaring falsetto over a text web of guitars, bass and drums with occasional concertina. In the 1970s she recorded in London with Dube Pukwana and Julian Bahula. In 1993 she made her first solo album *Libekulu*, produced by Will Mowat: is a triumphant affirmation of her mature expressive power.

Djelinnoussa Sissoko (Mali) (DOLBY DIGITAL) 1001 1001 CD
Khalid Rashid *Kurdistan* (Balaban) 1001 1001 CD
Based in Paris, Ceylan Piletier has adopted a wonderfully straightforward approach in organising this set of releases – the ingredients are a place of origin, an indigenous instrument, and a magnificent musician. Impeccable recording quality complements the package. Djelinnoussa Sissoko can have few rivals among Mali's younger kora players. The nine pieces on his new CD are uniformly dazzling workings of traditional material. A beguiling set for beginners, and an invaluable addition for devotees of the African harp-lute.

The balaban may not have the instantaneously accessible sound of the kora, this Kurdish obse is more of an acquired taste. But the enthusiastic response granted recent recordings of Osman Geyikyan playing the Armenian duduk, has prepared the way, and Khalid Rashid's balaban offers a rewarding next step. It's basically the same instrument, assuring formidable skill, including circular breathing techniques, to realise its potential. Rashid is a magnificent exponent, whether rendering a melancholic solo or responding in kind to driving percussive accompaniment.

Tama Walo *Kesepika* (Of The Talking Drum) (WALU) 1001 1001 CD
Tama Walo is a Senegalese percussion troupe based in Dakar. Its members belong to the Walo Walo people. Tama is the name of their talking drum. The producers claim

that this recording is the first publicly available documentation of this traditional dance music. The instrument has been heard in contexts furnished by popular West African singers such as Youssou N'Dour and Boubou M'Pala, but here it takes centre stage. The Tama Walo dancers belong to a hereditary caste of groves, so in a real sense the sound of their exhilarating rhythms forms a point of direct contact with a remote past.

Trio Petekatt *Adams* (SOURCE) 1010 CD
The nyckelharpa, a keyed fiddle with a bright metallic sound, is clearly a favoured instrument among the young musicians making up a new wave in Scandinavian folk music. Trio Petekatt includes two nyckelharpas, played by Johan Hedén and Markus Svensson, to which Annika Wijnbäck's cello provides the perfect complement. The trio's pious sound uncannily close to Gipsy Klezmer's accordion ensembles. Elsewhere the two stars exert the elegance of Renaissance consort music, while some of their instrumental flourishes would win over Kronos fans. Overall, this is far too enticing a recording to be consigned to the murky wilderness of folk arcane.

Various Artists *Gbè* (D'Inno/Mampodas) *Das We* (Chetani) (CHANT DU MOÏSE) 1001 1001 CD
These high quality field recordings were made by Hugo Zemp who has also contributed informative ethnomusicological notes. Using voices and relatively simple instruments, the We weave fascinating polyphonic music. There is nothing use of the hoarse technique, single tones rapidly articulated by distinct voices. The same technique can also be heard in 14th century French church music, and it informs the basis of Louis Ansermet's minimalist classic *Hibokur*. Listeners familiar with the Chant Du Moïse series will know that this one forms part of a serious archive, while showing appropriate respect for the surviving practices of an almost West African people. It is unsettling, in the best sense, to be able to witness on these powerful sounds. Check out the wend kabos and sis-dum-dalaga performed by members of the secret society Iwa.

Vásein *Varidens* (Vásein) (SOURCE) 1001 CD
Further evidence of the energy surge currently galvanising the Nordic folk scene, Vásein is a rickety quartet which should win instant approval from hardcore followers of the above band. Don't be misled by the cover picture, in which the boys resemble some weird mutation of Labetti. This is a magnificently conceived instrumental folk rock, performed expertly on guitar, percussion, viola and the ubiquitous nyckelharpa.

in brief jazz

Reviewed by Chris Blackford

Billy Bang *Offline No 12* COLUMBIA CD

Billy Bang's resuscitated *Offline No 12* (1993) features an 11-piece live jam line-up, coining talent and experience. The brief is to bridge the gap between avant-garde chamber music and improv. The strong reeds section includes Frank Lowe, the late Charles Tyler, and David Murray, plus there's veteran free percussionist Sunny Murray and bassist Wilbur Morris. Butch Morris applies improv-conduction techniques to chords devised by Bang, whose violin dominates the opening of "Seeing Together," playing with the kind of bang vigour that Benke and Rosta were wont to call for. For its time, this was bold, adventurous work, and deserves another hearing.

Braxton/Gillmor Duo 14 *Compositions (Tradition)* 1996 10/10 (JVC)

Eilon Dean Just Us COLUMBIA CD
Conversations about Anthony Braxton inevitably turn to the state of his discography. Every year the deluge of new Braxton recordings continues, and with his own recently established Braxton House label the prospect of Braxton/disc saturation becomes all the more alarming. At least Leo Records can't be accused of promoting him at the expense of equally deserving yet under-recorded contemporary composers/improvisers (see their excellent Leo Lab label). *14 Compositions (Tradition)* 1996 is a charming trinit of an album alongside his monumental projects, yet a satisfactory reply to those who still perceive him as a cold intellectual. He and Stewart Gilmer (piano, French horn) trumpet pull about the likes of Louis Armstrong, Henry Carmichael, Duke Ellington and Fats Waller, "hearing fun-fund new melodies and dissonances in old tunes."

British altoist Eilon Dean also has a sizeable discography, if just some way short of Braxton's proportions. Just Us (1971) is his debut album as a bandleader, was recorded a few months before Fifth was lost with Soft Machine. It features most of that LP's personnel (minus Hugh Hopper and John Marshall), plus the fine cornet of Marc Chang alongside Neville Whitehead. Nick Evans, Jeff Green and, on the luring furore of "Turn Cup," John Moholo. Long out of print, it's a timely reminder of how potent and independent-minded a force early British free jazz was, even though it received a fraction of the praise lavished upon the American scene. 25 minutes of previously unreleased material adds to this resusc's value.

Andrea Centazzo/Alvin Curran/Evan Parker *Real Time Two* NEW YORKER MUSIC SERIES #11 CD

Real Time One (Rome, 1977) was released in 1996, serving to remind us that this short-lived trio had its surprising moments, especially during the high-pitch microtonal exchanges between Curran's electronics and Parker's soprano sax. Curran and Parker impress in much the same way as before on *Real Time Two*, previously unreleased 44 minutes. Centazzo's rumbling drums and noisy cymbalwork sometimes seem superfluous, at worst cancelling out Curran's delicate electronics. Similarly, when Parker's agitated soprano calms down, perhaps not often enough. Curran's nightworld of tremulous oscillations and soaring tones comes into view and the music's vision begins to fascinate.

EaSiDe Percussion *ESP* KURT CD

Between them James Pughsee, Christine Bard and Michael Evans have a wealth of experience in US avant-garde groups, such as John Zorn's Cobra, God & My Co-Pilot, Marc Rober's Sirek, The Happy Cart Ensemble and Bang On A Can All-Stars. Here they supplement a huge array of Eastern and Western percussion with electronic devices (including a theremin with Echoplex and analogue delay) and found objects like laminated chopsticks, candle holder, oven rack, and payphone coin return cup. With all the stuff at their disposal, disc discipline and control is called for, and EaSiDe demonstrate this to great effect in 20 short improvisations, which subtly and potently explore non-idiomatic atmospherics as opposed to poverty-stricken rhetoric.

Martin Klapper & Roger Turner *Reccett Crouches* KCM CD

Martin Klapper's interest in experimental music began in the jungles of Prague. In 1984 he emigrated to Copenhagen from where he's participated in many collaborations on the European Improv scene. Jamie Hurr once recommended "Approach the rubbish with a total respect for its nature as rubbish, transforming that nature into the performing dimension" and Klapper does exactly that, releasing the essential low-grade croppiness of his amplified odds and soots. But if anyone can extract poignancy from a loose bombardment of a squally toy, Klapper's the man. His manipulation of tones is also inspired. British percussionist Roger Turner is another

seasoned master of punk aesthetics. Together they create a world of indelible textual resonances where indefinite pitch rules supreme. And the secret of its seductive ugly beauty lies in their deft, wondrous timing and close listening. Wondrous.

René Lussier & Pierre Tangany *La Vie Qui Bat/Chevre* AMPOC CD

René Lussier & Pierre Tangany *La Vie Qui Bat/Chevre* AMPOC CD

Pierre Tangany & Tom Walsh *Midi Tapant* AMPOC CD

Three recordings from stalwarts of the Quebec New Music scene. By the looks on the faces of guitarist René Lussier and percussionist Pierre Tangany, *Chevre* the first of their *La Vie Qui Bat* recordings, is meant to be a light-hearted affair with an interest in fables. Sadly, none of this warmth is conveyed in the playing, which lacks both variety and the spark of inspiration. Lussier's acoustic and electric guitars doggedly pursue a choppy, fragmentary course, alternated with an occasional lyrical glimmer, while an understated tangany plays out on drums and synthesizers, symbols to no great consequence.

The same pair fares a lot better on *Chevre*, where the Beatnik rockers play pitched on the sleeve sets the tone for the album. And in places it's funny (particularly songs like "La Vie Qui Bat" and "Salade Du Chef"), even though I can't understand much French. Unlike Hans Rechel, Lussier's no poet of the microphone, but his use of the outlandish instrument does provide some memorable beapal outbursts between Tangany's scattered snail percussions and effects.

Tangany is in less play mood for *Midi Tapant*, his duo with trombonist and sampler Tom Walsh, both apply an impressive light touch to their eclectic collages. "Un Petit Douleur" has a delightful, drifting, childlike quality, whereas "Frenz Overturn" comes close to Jan Frensch's Fourth World music, and "Est-Ce Que Peut Vient Jouer" carefully juxtaposes Oriental colours with Western orchestral density and jazz rhythms.

Trio Braam/Dejoode/Vatchez/Beetje Braam *Monk Material/Playing The Second Coolbook* BWAH 580111 2CD

L'Ozkrteuse Des Pas Perdus *Monk/Dance Malin* AMPOC CD

The idiosyncratic compositions of Theilous Monk continue to be a source of motive inspiration for a wide variety of contemporary improvisers, from Steve Lacy to David Moss. In 1990 Dutch pianist Michel Braam was commissioned to

interpret Monk themes for the Jazz Marathon Festival. Wilbert De Joode (double bass) and Michael Vatchez (drums) joined him. The trio invested their selection with an entertaining, bright and breezy energy and crisp technical virtuosity — the latter principally coming from Braam's dramatic leaps across the keys and roving eighth-note flourishes. But not much of the oblique, belyard heart and soul of Monk. "Cres-Cres" typifies Braam's tendency to cross the line between natural exuberance and showbiz, showing off. His Lenne Tratzino-influenced compositions on *Playing The Second Coolbook* have a goodie, good-time feel, aided by Ian Balleray and Martin France, whose work with Billy Jenkins holds them in good stead for all these bleak manouevres.

Canadians L'Ozkrteuse Des Pas Perdus denote their name are actually a sea piece ensemble, yet they have a punchy sequence of a sound that could fool you into thinking larger forces are at work. Their spontaneity is groove based contemporary jazz, interestingly, a sousaphone supplies the basline column beneath the well-dressed saxes and brass. However, they do possess a lurking sense of misadventure, which surfaces in small measure here, though bashed it's more evident in their live performances.

William Carlos Williams *Collection Plate* (1945-1960) 2CD

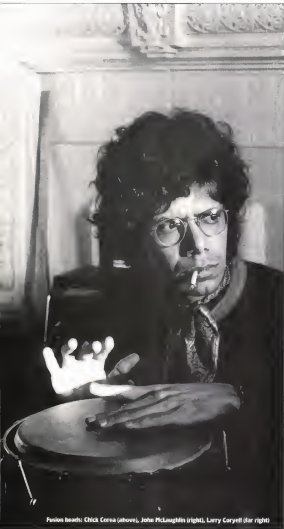
Henry Kuntz & Don Marvel *One One & One* HUMMINGBIRD CD

Positively monstrous souls to launch five pieces (plus guest) William Carlos Williams's second album, *Collection Plate*. The thunderous bass boom density, chawm guitars and fiddle-brow horns of "Kenny Delvers" and "Surface Tension" will certainly join you to the living room wall if your speakers can handle it. They flow a decent tune, too, like Lester Bowie's "Zero", even if it gets held up by a few medicine solos along the way. In fact, some dozen needed shape to their rudimentary jam session approach to the free jazz/rock fusion.

Henry Kuntz has been a purveyor of free jazz and improvisation for more than 20 years. The first disc here, *One One & One*, is Kuntz alone on tenor sax sounding for the most part like Evan Parker (sch tone coming from the middle of the instrument while simultaneously sending out squally overtones from the top end), but minus Parker's multi-phonic complexity and astute sense of compositional development. For all Kuntz's technical know-how there just isn't sufficient variety of inspiration to command attention for a full CD. On disc two, *One One & One*, Don Marvel processes and messes around Luntz's tenor. Charlie Hunter and Neelam Bamoo Luntz. Given the instrumentation and process, the multigendered results are less than enthralling.

print run

New music books: read, raved about, roughed up



Fusion heads: Chick Corea (above), John McLaughlin (right), Larry Coryell (far right)

Jazz Rock: A History

By Stuart Nicholson
CANDIDATE FOR F.U.'S

A lean study of an all too bloated genre, Stuart Nicholson cites the reason for the critical bile that has been heaped on jazz rock as a simple one: its association with fusion, which was inherently false and ultimately damaging to its development. Jazz rock, according to Nicholson, is a genuine creative impulse, one which emerged partly as a consequence of the cultural and political turmoil that characterised America, and particularly black America, on the cusp of the 70s. In the process, it created a hybrid that did not so much extend the directions of either genre, as wear off on a completely tangential journey. Fusion, on the other hand, was nothing more than a marketing device, dreamt up by commercial radio stations and record companies in the US to satisfy ad revenue demographics. Ironically, the book is accompanied by a CD release, titled *The Real Birth Of Fusion 7we1*.

Nicholson places the origins of jazz rock



firmly as the feet of the rock fraternity, citing groups such as Cream and Soft Machine as forerunners. More interesting, however, are the pages he devotes to the forgotten heroes who came at the new music from the jazz side: Ian Carr's Nucleus, Gary Burton's Duster and particularly the star-crossed guitarist Larry Coryell. The music produced by these musicians was a viable hybrid, not merely work in one genre with hints of the other. (Coryell, motivated by possibly not paying, these are the people who actually drew up the jazz rock blueprint. Mostly they never got to capitalise on it.)

From here on in Nicholson structures the narrative around a number of key figures, showing in clear and easily readable detail how their personal and artistic development

led them to jazz rock. The golden period (1967-74) is well represented by all the obvious figures — Miles Davis, John McLaughlin, Tony Williams, Weather Report, Herbie Hancock. The conclusions are just as familiar. *Lifetimes* and the first three Mahavishnu Orchestra LPs stand at the apex of jazz rock's achievements, while the excesses of Return To Forever's *Romantic Warrior* signalled the beginning of the end. Inevitably, Bitches Brew is held up as a pivotal moment, the record that defined a genre, but for Nicholson, this has less to do with the quality of the music, and more with Miles Davis's position as a catalyst and figurehead of the new music. It's a shame, however, that Nicholson hasn't got more to say on the impact which the music of Sly Stone and James Brown had on Davis, Tony Williams and Billy Cobham. And although he's given more coverage than both Stone and Brown, Jimi Hendrix surely merits a chapter of his own. His music is clearly worthy of discussion on its own terms, not merely in relation to the development of Miles Davis.

In many ways, Nicholson's charting of jazz rock's decline makes more interesting reading than its glory days. Clearly he's a fan and, as such, there's a certain rose-coloured reverence towards the greats that obscures objectivity. But he's astute and honest enough to acknowledge that, with the possible exception of McLaughlin, none of his heroes managed to carry the jazz rock torch into the future. By the late 70s, the music had surrendered itself up to the commercial opportunities offered by fusion, which were fully exploited by such labels as CTI and even Blue Note. In contrast, Nicholson expresses real delight in discovering genuine alternatives to Kenny G, such as Black Jazz Records.

As so often happened in times of jazz



chris, Miles Davis again came to the rescue. His BOp albums served to re-ignite public interest in a form of pop influenced jazz rock motivated by creative imperatives rather than purely commercial considerations. This avenue proved something of a dead end, however, and the more interesting contemporary developments have come from alternative sources. Nicholson cleverly argues that this trend is part of jazz rock's underground continuum which takes in Frank Zappa, Ornette Coleman's harmalodics, and the likes of Ronald Shannon Jackson and Steve Coleman whose 90s groups injected coruscating doses of R&B flavour into jazz's increasingly rare atmosphere. He also accounts for the cut and paste global raiding of Bill Laswell and, finally, New York's downtown scene. Somewhat inexplicably John Zorn arguably the most important jazz musician in the world today — merits less than a page in Nicholson's account. Those are the people who have kept jazz rock alive, even if, in the process, they have mutated it into forms unrecognisable to those who wanted it

PETER MCINTIRE

Lunar Notes: Zoot Horn Rollo's Captain Beefheart Experience

By Al. Hanklerod with Billy James
\$45 PUBLISHED: FEB 11 1995

When John Peel declared on British television that for him, Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band's *Troux Most Alpaca* was the greatest rock album ever his judgment was a smack in the face for rock culture as currently constituted. For a reigning canon that equates rock with sales figures rather than transformation of consciousness, where Phil Collins is more honoured than Bob Dylan, Captain Beefheart provides a nemesis. For partisan critics, he is our trump card: our nearest dissident. His electrifying music points beyond the narrow scope of rock journalism — what with its 'survivor' sentimentality about celebrities and their tedious drug and marital problems — to Hardcore 20th century art and its rejection by society.

It's not just rock culture that founders on Beefheart; the diluted avant-garde circled in official artspaces also looks makeshift, self-conscious and cravenly inched in comparison. Beefheart and The Magic Band threatened to make surrealism and dada a mass phenomenon, something lived rather than regarded, a revolution signalling the end of a culture based on commodity exchange and hierarchical separation. Next to *Troux Most Alpaca* the art pop postures of the Eros and Bowles and Hirsts pale into insignificance. And it is not just a style culture experiment, recuperable, something to grow out of. It's there, objectively, in the way the music is put together.

Rock in the 60s was part of the worldwide



Zoot Horn Rollo

discovery of black American blues and R&B. To perpetrate his collision of modern art and black music, painter/sculptor Don Van Vliet required musicians. Bill Hanklerod — renamed Zoot Horn Rollo — was his guitar player, and this is his story as told to Billy James. Hanklerod is an unassuming, likable conversationalist. He declares that he is under no illusion that the book is about him so it only covers The Magic Band years and the immediate aftermath. In an introduction, guitar hero Henry Kasser tries to argue that the role of the musicians in The Magic Band has been understated, but Hanklerod is clear the group was obvious origins. The discipline was tough, much of what Beefheart asked of them was played in non-musical terms and required translation: but the special quality of the resulting music was down to their unique leader and singer. This is obvious if you compare the two records: The Magic Band made after they split from Beefheart, issued by Virgin under the name Malford. Their sub-Little Feat Country tune was leakable enough, but despite some attempts to be wacky, it was devoid of the power and strangeness that infused these releases.

One interpretation of Beefheart is that his oeuvre showed a downward curve as he grew more commercial after *Troux Most* then burst into fluorescence in the 1980s. This point of

view emanates from the centrist, partial, post-avant ideology of musical resonance espoused by the pseudo-Grimsians of Henry Cow and Recommended Records. Though there are some fine poems and clattering instrumentalists to be heard on *Do! At The Rooster Scroon and Ice Cream For Crow*, they accept art: status and therefore lack the populist impetus and universal aspiration of the classic Magic Band productions. The 80s music isn't chart bound, it knows it doesn't really matter. Even *Unconditionally Guaranteed*, routinely dismissed as a self-out by drift centers, contains meditations on vacuum pop forms that are more interesting than the *Troux Most* reveals of the 80s. In the mid-70s, something broke in Beefheart, and the world, and it's useless pretending that all the elements were still in place. Hanklerod was aboard for all the truly indispensable albums.

As Hanklerod explains it, Beefheart's methodology recalls James Brown: a non-musical directing players to realise beats they would never have dreamed up on their own. The Magic Band all lived in the same house, dominated by Beefheart's poetry recitals and philosophical lectures like *Suit Go* with his Ancestress. Beefheart's experiments with non-linear acoustics suggest a mutation of consciousness only a reorganised social basis could recognise as non-pathological. Naturally, as with all rock

music that gets beyond Velvets-style drones and four-square monotony (what Beefheart called rock's "old mama heartbeats") drugs were taboo.

Hanklerod points out one aspect that is essential. Beefheart was applying ideas from the high avant-garde to rock. Therefore any serious approach to Beefheart needs to break from the stranglehold of rock mundanity: tours, recording dates, discographies and deal with the proposals about vision and perception made by Wyndham Lewis, Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning. These painters, whose understanding of the relation of the seeing eyeball to the world has been marginalized by a mass media dependent on the 19th century invention of the photograph, are the foundation of all that is 'wild' in Beefheart. If avant-garde aesthetics are post-pushed as 'irrelevant', Beefheart indeed becomes the freak that he complained Frank Zappa made of him when marketing *Troux Most Alpaca*.

One piece of absurd speculative interpretation that gains confirmation here is the connection Wakefield-based Zappalagist Kitty Reese made between Beefheart and Einstein (she maintained that Beefheart's poems on Zappa's *Bongo Burg* were examples of post-relativistic perception indicated by his wearing sockless shoes — a trademark of Einstein's — on the cover). Hanklerod actually reports that Beefheart 'copped a look' off Einstein after seeing a photo of him wearing a fedora-type hat a long coat and holding a cigarette.

Today Hanklerod is happily married, teaches guitar and works in a record store. Now an orthodox Salsable muso, he refers to Pat Metheny and Michael Brecker. Only occasionally, when some 'puberty-laden' guitar duet questions his testicular right to speak the plank does he fetch out *Troux Most Alpaca* — and there is Zoot Horn Rollo on the back cover, standing on the wooden footbridge to the left of Antennae Jimmy Semmes, a spectral, bearded zombie, more far out looking than any rock guitarist before or since. Though these moments don't challenge what you could have guessed from the records, Beefheart was a bully, he made his groups do strange things! Zoot Horn Rollo's directness and honesty is refreshing, an excellent volume to peruse while repaying his unforgettable glass-lined guitar part to 'moonlight On Vermont'.

BEW WATSON

Have Gun Will Travel: The Spectacular Rise And Violent Fall Of Death Row Records

By Ronin Ro
\$49.95 PUBLISHED: FEB 11 1995

In summer 1988-90 as a golden age for rap. The culmination of Public Enemy's

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marriage of ferocity and complexity, the explorations of Afrocentric roots by The Jungle Brothers and A Tribe Called Quest, the Hallucinogen-Hop of De La Soul's first LP, and the turntablist P-funk of Digital Underground's Sex Packets. But the record that dominated the era was one of the bristliest and most basic — N.W.A.'s *Str8 Outta Compton*.

On *Compton*, the BOB boom-beats and sample-blats laid down by former Electro producer Dr Dre were coupled with the raw technique of lead rapper Ice Cube. Technically Cube might never have got close to the almost classical breath control of Rakim or the authority of Chuck D, but no other rapper ever sounded so enraged with the world.

Concerned with neither political analysis nor looking back to the motherland, the chasm between N.W.A. and the music press was best illustrated when one UK journalist asked them how they felt about being described as the "black Sex Pistols." "Who the fuck are The Sex Pistols?" countered N.W.A. Cube neatly summed up their nihilism on the track that christened a genre, "Gangsta, Gangsta": "Do I look like a motherfucker role model? To a kid lookin' up to me? Life ain't nuttin' but bitchin' and money."

Compton opened with a single ominous statement: "You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge." Bids were also about to witness Compton's earning power, and naturally they wanted to muscle in on the territory.

Suge Knight, a college football star turned bouncer, lured Dre away from N.W.A. to form Death Row Records. With a roster including Tupac Shakur and Snoop Doggy Dogg, the label had a turnover of \$325 million within four years. To get the stars he wanted Knight's methods were brutally effective. He backed his business acumen with muscle, solving personnel problems and difficult manager negotiations with severe beatings.

Have Gun is an appropriately lurid account of Knight's career, with every punchup brutally recounted in bone-cracking detail. The supporting characters are no less colorful: Knight's Puka-connected attorney David Kemner, his even more hands-on associates such as Lolo Dogg and Jake "The Violator" Roshes, and the obnoxious Tupac, who mocked his inescapable by playing up his gangster status, until someone took him at his word and put a bullet in him.

Scary he might be, but Knight comes out of the story better than the weary white music execs and predatory lawyers making their rich pickings around the edges of the story. Indeed, some of his alleged misdeeds might have endeared him to the jury — like the time he dangled Vanilla Ice from a hotel balcony effectively ending the milquetoast rapper's music career. And nobody could say Suge was afraid of getting his hands dirty.

The downside of author Romo-Rios' muckraking style is that it is sloppily written and repetitious. Also, he has next to nothing to say about Death Row's music. The closest he

gets to analyse is through quoting other critics opposing views of the records, so as not to incriminate himself with anything so contentious as his own opinion. One moment we're told that Dre's *The Chronic* was "a throwback to a soulless period in black culture" and a step back from *Compton*; the next it's described as a "connoisseur's masterpiece". So which is it, Ro? I'd argue that *Death Row* paved the way for the R&B karaoke of Puffy Combs and his execrable Bad Boy stable. Not the kind of achievement I want on my record.

Ro's discussion of Death Row's impact on

white middle America leaves us none the wiser as to how it happened. Despite gangsta rappers' catchall defence that they were merely "representing reality" they were mostly selling it to white audiences with no experience of this particular reality, vacuous entertainment rather than social education. As a *Guardian* review of an Ice T single put it: "Buy this and shit yourself at someone else's misery."

Public Enemy's Chuck D, a critic of the Gangsta game, once said "Gangsta rap is an illusion — a gangster can commit a crime, and make someone else pay for it. I don't believe a

black person in America can be a gangster." Platinum records aren't bulletproof, as Tupac Shakur learned to his cost. Meanwhile, Suge is behind bars on a nine-year stretch for probation violations, and a number of forlorn Federal law enforcement agencies are working up a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) case against Death Row, deploying tactics normally reserved for cracking Mafia front organisations. Maybe black Americans can become gangsters, but only if they can stand the excess heat.

PINK SHALLOOS



Ice Cube (left), Suge Knight (middle), Tupac Shakur (right)

Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings

By Peter Dinklage
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS OF VIRGINIA

This is the first biography of the massively influential jazz pianist Bill Evans. In fact, the first book about him of any description, though he died aged 51 in 1980. Evans's introverted personality and understated style meant that he was always something of a musician's musician. But his dexterity influenced many of today's most important pianists — Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and their successors — and indirectly, through his approach to harmony, almost all the others, and not just in jazz. Only uncompromising avant-garde like Cecil Taylor were immune, and they were his most powerful critics, mistaking his approach for an offbeat jazz updating of Debussy and Ravel.

Evans is most famous for his brief tenure with Miles Davis which produced the groundbreaking *Kind Of Blue*, where he shared an equal role with the leader. The story is that the modal jazz that Evans — with Davis and Coltrane — pioneered turned out to be insufficiently lyrical for his needs. It was McCoy Tyner who pushed us on Evans's developments, simplifying them and exerting an influence that seemed almost equal to his, though it hasn't proved so enduring.

One of the great artists of the improvised line, Evans's trio on the legendary Village Vanguard recordings from 1961 — with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian displayed a level of interactive empathy and freedom new to the piano trio format. The pianist's miraculous re-harmonisations transformed saccharine show tunes like "My Foolish Heart" and "My Romance" into art songs — to borrow Peter Dinklage's rather classical perspective. His excellent biography explores Evans's role as an intense musical thinker responsible for some revolutionary developments — not just modal jazz, but also the consummate multitracking of *Conversations With Myself* and later albums, and the collaborations with George Russell such as *Jazz In The Space Age*.

"How My Heart Sings" was a song by Evans's favourite composer, Earl Zindars. It makes an apt subtitle for this biography. Dinklage's key musical thesis is that Evans used the 'singing' approach of the classical piano technique in which he was trained to create an understated but powerful, emotional expression unprecedented in jazz. Peter is persuasive on how this was achieved. Evans said his work "must have that wonderful feeling of singing" — appealing to the paradoxical classical technique of emulating a singing tone from what is essentially a percussive instrument. Peter explains how Evans widened the sound by arm weight from the depth of the keys, not the surface. "The note sings." The sound is alive and breathing, and is heard, not just as details at a certain pitch, but as a manifestation of an artistic spirit. He

possessed that priceless attribute: the ability to communicate feeling through sound.

Peter is one of a growing band of classical practitioners who are devotees of Evans. The Kronos Quartet have performed arrangements of Evans, and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet released a tribute album of Evans transcriptions. Of course this kind of approach raises poignant dilemmas, and Peter's classical bias forms a questionable subtext. The classical repertoire explored by Evans as a student at Southernham College, Louisiana gets fuller discussion than the jazz pianists who were equally influential. Those who didn't extract a "singing tone" that is almost all of them in jazz before Evans — are little discussed. The implication seems to be that Duke Ellington, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk lacked an essential vehicle

to hear on this planet or anywhere else.

As with Charlie Parker and Art Pepper, Evans was a jazz life thoroughly shaped by drug dependence. So was the music. I'm sure the fibrous, frank utopians of the last two needed a lot to Evans's "cocaine period." He was mostly on heroin or cocaine, and Peter is clear on the squallor that resides alongside the beauty. He is also not afraid to discuss the reversal lesson that Evans suffered from. It certainly added to the pressures on this sensitive music, an inability during his tenure with Miles Davis. It is a heart-rending, tragic story — one of his friends called it "the longest suicide in history." Reading this book brings it into close focus, and for those who love Evans's music, it will be almost unbearably poignant.

ANDY HAMILTON



Bill Evans

of expression. Revolutions! Peter criticizes the format for playing too sharp and trashes the dignity of jazz recording engineers. Rudy Van Gelder.

But that's my only substantial criticism of what is a marvellous book. Dinklage is always stimulating, full of good sense, and eloquent about his subject's achievement. His book is an exhaustively researched labour of love. It is a continuous biography and the musical argument is developed along the way. Perhaps a summary chapter on Evans's style would have been useful, however. Peter gives little consideration to Evans's critics. A more objective assessment of his rhythmic conception — his relatively weak point — would have been useful. I have some ideas of what those critics are getting at, because I used to be one. I stupidly dismissed Evans as a "classical pianist" that was a long time ago. Now, I confess, I think he produced some of the most hauntingly beautiful music you're likely to

The New York Dolls: Too Much Too Soon

By Nick Antonia
CRASH/ROCKS REP. 10/91

Of course the title is ironic. The New York Dolls never had nothing, and they got even less back than the little they gave out. They were just another bunch of rock 'n' roll drifters from the boroughs, who misook their proximity to Manhattan as an outside chance at the big time. With a tad too little talent to play straight, they hit on the novelty factor of going out in drag, five proudly queers from the borough of Queens, many who swallowed their immigrant macro pride when they discovered the pulling power of boys in dresses.

Of course, I'm being too hard. Sorry, but Nina Armato's toony and hoarse "romanticizing of the Dolls' rock 'n' roll outlaw status, authenticated by the DOs of their guitars, Johnny Thunders and their first



drummer Billy Murcia, invites a harsh corrector. Lamently written in a pseudo-hip angst, composed of one part Kenneth Anger's snide-sneering talchert savagery and seven parts gothme eulogy, the role distance she affects from the subjects' soon dissolves in her all-too-queer aural jazz, with which she indulges their lapses, cool. There goes hogged up Johnny beating on his girlfriend again. Yet if not for Nina, who would record this sorry story?

Well, fuck Kent! For one. His account of The Dolls' woes and virtues, in his collection *Dark Horse*, is more evocative of New York City's early '70s do/drams following the demise of The Velvet Underground, than The Dolls took advantage of. He is also more in tune about the enduring appeal of a speedrock 'n' roll group with a Romeo-Spartan lexicon, who were too pop for Punk, too fast for hard rock, and too early for Metal.

In addition, they were too mannish for the NYC queen scene flapping around Warhol's Factory, and they were too dragged up gum to be glam. Boy, they were real miffs who never say you looked at them. But mostly because their take on trash trailled their NYC borough roots, they managed to establish a centre for their loose, lochie, occasionally thriving songs, spilling gipsy raps and subculture discontent. The best of them are also on their debut album *New York Dolls*. Their success, such as it was, was their undying. More concerts and money meant better and harder drug. Soon vocalist David Johansen and Johnny Thunders were pulling in different directions. Songs for their second LP were slow in coming. Their bad reputation ran ahead of them, making it difficult for them to play outside New York. Malcolm McLaren became their manager just in time to pick up on the lure of the lost, which he crosswired with Situationism (redressing the group in red leather and hammer and sickle imagery) and created his version of punk rock.

Armata has little to add to Kent's insular loving appraisal other than a catalogue of mishaps and misadventures.

BRAH KOPPI

multi media

Dean Roberts witnesses art lose the InfoWar at Ars Electronica 98

Flying under the banner InfoWar, Ars Electronica 98 held its sleepy host town Linz hostage inside a virtual city and subjected it to a six-day bombardment of noise and images. Numerous venues were commandeered for its performances, installations and symposiums, all of them working at the interface of media theory, information technology and war. Of course, no InfoWar would be complete without veteran modernist Paul Virilio of *Pure War* fame and other guests included "An IUSampling provocateur responsible for the cheeky *Deconstructing (Re) CD* and war correspondent George J. Sain. Sure, the combatants looked a good fight, but the best thing about wars fought in the virtual realm is that they leave no scars. At least not on the surface.

The festival opened with a big bang made by Scratch's Global Hockets: an elaborate gamelan-like percussion work performed on instruments designed by the group's leader, Philip Daddio. Constructed from cheap industrial materials, they were as detailed in design as the music played on them. Teens in the making, Global Hockets keyed the music to video and computer-generated images, engaged in a call and response routine with each other. The visuals were provided by Frankfurt media artist Michael Soup's Supreme Particles project. Global Hockets perpetrated as successful a marriage of acoustic music, image and technology, as one could hope to witness. Advertised as "a new media performance," which provocatively and comically evokes

contemporary forms of creative presentation in the interplay of traditional artistic elements and interactive computer graphics," Global Hockets certainly fulfilled its own brief. However, it was hardly addressing the festival's more pressing issues. Ars Electronica 98 was out to promote artists whose principal weapon in the information war is political collage, montage as a running dialectic that finally resolves itself in the mind of the viewer. And if all else fails, you can always blind viewers with science. The live night performance of FA Huber's Supercollider project, dealt with the concept of particles in collision. The parameters were set by an audio software program which fragmented, accelerated and collided sound fragments played live by Scanner, Kruder & Dorfmeister. Trösa and others. Huber's Supercollider organized these sources inside a democratic structure that permitted hushed subsonics to do battle with electroacoustic fragments and Techno beat endurance. His examination of the interplay of musicians playing live, pre-recorded materials, and real-time sound processing, carried away favourably by the ready-made approach of Staalplaat's Sound Of Music event, which staved the date tombolery of Negeland's, the underdressed Barbed and People Like Us into an audiovisual live for all.

Over two evenings, the Sound Of Music's Pluriphonic absurdism wore a very thin sheath over cringe-inducing clichés. Negaland confirmed the belief that American art can be so safely obscure. Their fellow countrymen Tom Sherman and Bernhard Lohrner had already planted seeds of doubt with their *Nerve Theory* performance earlier in the week. Sherman intoned his monologue on neurons and delusion caused by information overload over "found footage," which gave good air mileage to those crazy old soundbys — TV evangelists and CNN broadcasts. It was like industrial culture never happened.

Project Adu's ode to sound pioneer Nikola Tesla took the info war out of the museum and into the streets. Well, OK, onto the river. Broadcasting from a boat going down the Danube, the shifting setting was certainly spectacular, what with the rippling reflections of the city lights playing across the water while the white-filled with the explosive throbs of a four-speaker system powered by Bose's Music's Note, Belyon, Komert and Ansh. Their noises and images were produced from signals picked up from the anechoic via a satellite receiver. These noise transmissions were subsequently sequenced into minimalist pulses surging through massive



Paul Virilio beams into InfoWar. Left: Scratch's Global Hockets

spectrum blocks of sound. Even allowing for the sound dispersal of the outdoor setting, their voices pummeled the earth and reverberated through the entire body.

Though it was undeniably impressive as a sound assault, its live satellite concept was somewhat undermined when the supposed randomness of its visual material, satellite-bounced from who knows where, turned out to be pre-recorded on video cassette. For a work purportedly dealing with the plundering of information technologies, the use of pre-recorded materials implied a lack of faith in the random principle essential to the shattering of the media's thought control. And again, is there anything left to be said through collages of surveillance footage, CNN and religious broadcasts? This InfoWar was proving to be more an aesthetic squabble over ownership of cliché materials than a serious engagement with the political issues surrounding the control and flow of information. The most satisfying events were those that concentrated on sheer spectacle. For Sonica's performance trapped an audience on a train ride around Europe's largest

satellite for a good host of electronic fun. The timeworn industrial panorama of motion steel and flowing smoke contrasted strongly with Paul Sonica's speed down electronics, with which they transformed the sound of raw electricity into a mesmerizing monochromatic pulse.

If the point of Ars Electronica was to stage the historic spectacle of media artists scabbing at the lock of digital technology, it too often ended up exposing artistic impotence in the face of the super or forces of its targeted military-industrial-information-technology-entertainment complex. As ever, the all-powerful "They," whoever "They" may be, were cast as the villains of the piece.

In too many instances, the media subversions perpetrated by Ars Electronica's participants were as dictatorial and as inhibiting of free thought as the broadcast media they were parodying. Once you got over the weak force of the technology on display, most practices collapsed because they were conceptually built on an edifice of info war clichés. Plunging media elements is all very well, but you need something stronger to hold them together than virtual masking tape. L.



GO TO:



Plunderphonics/ Oswaldian Space

www.interlog.com/~r2d2victor/cso/cx.html

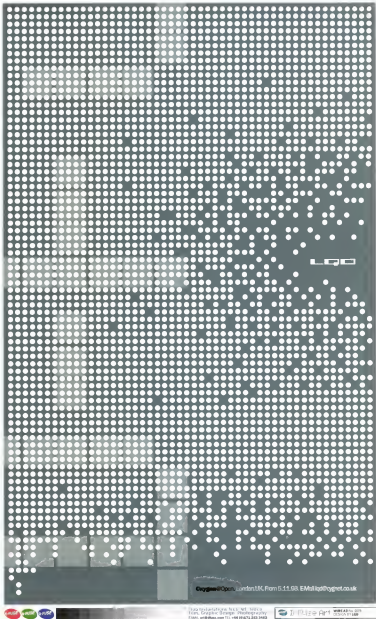
Clicking on the individual letters of the word 'plunderphonics' zaps you to this Website's sub-areas, dedicated to John Oswald's annotated discographies, a timeline of plunderphonics, a lengthy interview with Oswald by American writer Norman Igras, numerous technical explications by the artist himself of his own working practice, and meditations on the politics of electroquotation, the only question unanswered is what Oswald's been up to in the last 12 months. Oswald's magisterial paper on the fundamental issues at stake in the whole sampling/originality/copyright/reproduction debate, "Audio Piracy As A Compositional Prerogative", is reproduced in full, and there are many soundfiles in streaming audio to be plundered. For a broader Net-based overview of recycled culture in its multifarious forms, visit www.detritus.net

British Music Information Centre

www.bmic.co.uk/

Not quite as broad based as it sounds, British Music only applies to modern classical composers, in this instance. The new online presence of the London-based BMIC contains a database of 30,000 scores and 15,000 recordings which can be searched through via a multi-option menu so if you've heard a piece that's say for electronics and chamber ensemble, and you know the composer is female but can't remember the name, you can toggle through these permutations. Separate directories arranged by composer and performer/ensemble lead to contact information for music publishers and organisations and there's a regularly updated live concert listing. But there is a slightly unfinished feel to certain sections — a list of recordings omits the info you really need to know, such as the relevant record labels.

RON YOUNG



on location

Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

Labradford's First Annual Festival Of Drifting

UK: London South Bank Centre & St John's Church

The opening night of the Festival Of Drifting is outside and overpriced. Apparently, novelist Ian Sinclair and nominal hosts Labradford could be the last artists to perform amplified out here on the roof of London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, so the main enjoyment of the event stems from relating the view across to the north bank of the Thames, where you can take in the entire three mile sweep of the capital's power base, from the Houses of Parliament on the left, through the Inner Temple of Law to the NatWest Tower. Otherwise, this is essentially an expensive book reading en plein air, accompanied by Paul Smith's travel videos and topped off with a typically hip-thruze set from Labradford. Ian Sinclair's chafed prose (like that of WG Sebald, actually finds space to roam within England's narrowlands [beneath the pavement the target of history]) following a meditation on drift, he invokes his allergy-addict friend, writer Michael Moorcock, who promptly puts in an unscheduled appearance — make that disappearance, as he remains sealed in a hirsute mound for the duration of his reading.

Labradford's appeal escapes me: there's that dumb name, dense as a truck, and music more concerned with stasis than movement, however lumbering. They work best out here, where their music can blow, half heard, up into the night sky; a tremble-shimmer to match the constellations reflected in the black Thames, and the flapping rag tied to the summit of a half-finished apartment block, twitching like someone about to jump. On stage in the QEH the next night, the towering mass of their guitar and Moog abstractions lets like an inert black legion, stagnating while the stream flows on elsewhere.

The second night is the week's most diverse. Pan Sonic, joined by Bruce Gilbert, deconstructs the place with the addition of caustic, effluent. They nose into their nose slowly, accumulating inaudibles until it's swimming out in thick, rich layers. Gilbert pokes whistles and howlers into the crowscapes until the whole construct is thrumming like an outsize hive. Surprisingly, there are few walkouts in the audience. Perhaps they're soaking up the buzz in readiness for Ludovico Einaudi's Ambient harp froth. Harpal Cecilia Chally, performing Einaudi's compositions, looks like she'd rather be somewhere else, and crooks and plucks for longer than necessary through the maffinative Sonus. Somehow it's more fun if you imagine the instrument is playing her.

The Duruti Column have always been a fantastic idea whose time never seems to come, but Vini Reilly looks utterly unfrustrated by the fact as he kneels on the floor coddling

Labradford on the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall

his guitar. The Durutti Column play in public so rarely nowadays they come across as freakish, giggling adolescents at Junior's party. But Rilly's mob genuinely lives up to the rubric of Drift: Longtime Columnist Bruce Mitchell, grizzled as a loachskin, looms large on a huge drum kit. "We don't do it very often, but we can show 'em how it's done" is what his Animal Fables and cheeky grin impart to the proceedings. Rilly responds with equal enthusiasm but none of the goofing "Happy Mondays" like a combat-tornured harmonica player wanders on and offstage like a muscled cue at a Nativty play, gingerly photographing the rest of the group. Rilly's scudding guitar chimes just into the venue's dead air. The effect is akin to watching sheets of snow as soon as you try to train your eyes on one flake; the entire blizzard appears to slow down. There are grunts from some of the best Durutti albums — drum solos, operatic samples — before hammered Rhodes syncopators summoned by Rilly's absurdly long fingers take us past the midnight hour.

BOB YOUNG

To the Situationists, the *dérive* (drift) was an experiment in the destruction of maps and codes, a chance to wander the city, transcending the normal pathways and following contours of ambience. This was psychogeography, an attempt to re-map the world in favour of psychic, not geometrical, associations.

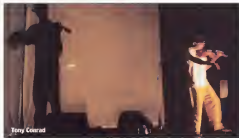
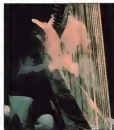
Not all the performers in this festival are inclined to see drifting as a form of radicalism, but two clearly do. Even in his 70s heyday, Charlemagne Palestine was never reducible to the Minimalist label with which he was often stuck. His piano pieces were cathartic rituals, pounding at the keys of his Bösendorfer until spectral harmonies pierced the tumultuous abyss of sound, as strings snapped and fingers bled. He combined the visionary singularity of La Monte Young with the self-sacrificial masochism of performance artists such as Chris Burden, and would sing lengthy drones while fingering himself against walls or hurtling round a gallery like a dervish.

St John's Church, near Waterloo, is an almost cubic space, an empty white and gold box. At the start of Palestine's concert, a single soft chord is droning away on the church organ, positioned in the gallery behind the audience. Palestine is patient, gradually adding extra notes, subtracting one or two shifting the mass of drone-tones through delightfully slow cycles. On the first few cycles, numbing releases of sonic energy seemed to trickle out of the organ and it takes one or two minutes before I realise it's only the sound of trains passing nearby. It's a golden sound, a lustrous, glowing complex of harmonies which never slip into collective drift. As slowly as he allows it to grow, Palestine lets the sound collapse back into that single held chord.

Suddenly, his voice is with us, waiving down the aisle, singing pure tones and resonant

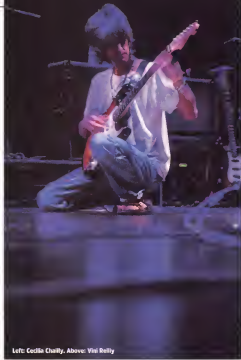
overtones like a Tibetan monk or Jewish cantor (the earliest musical memories are of singing in a synagogue choir). It's gorgeously simple, more so as he audibly searches for tones that ring out in sympathy with the spatial drone. Picking one of his iconic stuffed toys from the piano, Blind Monkey, he leans to its gentle rattle, a spirit guide imparting incomprehensible musical mysteries.

Palestine's piano pieces are legendary for their cataclysmic energy, their ability to tease out glorious harmonic effects from the simplest repeated two-note rhythm. Sitting at the piano tonight, this same technique is applied to more subtle ends. The first notes are barely perceptible ripples and the continuing organ drone, but thereafter they thump, then flood. Hammering away, Palestine gradually weaves a magical harmonic car's cradle out of the simplest combination of notes. From the piano, it's over to a tape machine, to add pre-recorded electronic shimmers to the sound. These scintillating



fragments are perhaps the most early beautiful moment so far, and as they rise, Charlemagne marches off to repeatedly circumnavigate the audience. Noiser elements fade up on the tape — field recordings of crowds, music, noise — and he starts to dance a little, then run.

Eventually, he silences the tape, leaving only the constant golden organ chord behind, now as much a part of the space as the gold paint on the walls. He returns upstairs to the organ, and before long, the sound is growing super-dense again. When he drops out a whole



Left: Cecilie Chailly. Above: Vini Rilly

wave of tones to leave only the lowest notes it's glowingly gorgeous, and at its most thunderously volcanic, I notice that a florilla of candles near the front of a church is nearly out. It's a good time to stop, and he does.

For Palestine, the exploration of resonant space through sustained sound (as close to "drifting" as he gets) is an opportunity to directly connect spirit and body, by re-emphasizing the physicality of hearing. Terry Conrad, performing at the Queen Elizabeth Hall a few nights later, also searches for more than just another opportunity to drift off

Tonight sees Conrad alone with his violin, and even by the standards of this notorious progenitor of Minimalism, this performance is a stripped-down affair. The stage is entirely shrouded behind a white gauze curtain, and only a single lightbulb at the back illuminates Conrad, casting an enormous shadow onto the veil. This double image is an apt metaphor for Conrad's work: his scorching Minimalist drone casts a shadow too — the glinting overtones beyond the strident wolf notes. It's also a conscious nod to his peculiar musical history: his most famous music, created in collaboration with John Cale, La Monte Young and others during the 60s, is known only by virtue of its reputation and influence, the recordings remaining unavailable.

Tonight's performance at first foregrounds Conrad's raw, uncompromising violin technique. Scraping antagonistic drones out of its strings, you get the feeling that he's cut it in half and make it scream if only he could. It's utterly inescapable, like having a nerve trapped under a grinder, a piercing sound that refuses to be ignored. After a while, the oscillator and Conrad's extended playing technique take over, and the drone, although soft and full, becomes considerably more complex. At times, it's surprisingly effective, perhaps even romantic, despite the stiffness. It is in no way

on location

abstract music like Palestrina. Conrad has a very direct, physical relationship with his sound, and his music has a convulsing brilliance that bekes its unforgetting friction. It's difficult to think straight under the assault, and even less easy to give it undivided attention throughout, but Conrad's psychogeography of sound remains a potent antidote to conventional musical maps.

BRIAN DUGUID

On the festival's closing night, Bill Nelson admitted he knocked up the backing tracks for what he described as a performance of "instrumental karaoke" fairly quickly. Some of the music was colourful and sensuous — particularly "Jupiter Blend", which incorporated live recordings — but just as often it sounded like high-class noodling for guitar and occasional marimba. The highlight was a resourceful guitar improvisation using delays but otherwise Nelson seemed loath to push himself. He could roll along like this indefinitely.

The house lights dimmed and the stage lights went up, revealing a seated John Martyn reading a magazine. "Oh, sorry," he apologised in his straggly Glaswegian/Cockney tone, "just drifting." I was lucky enough to see Martyn perform an evening solo set in 1979 and then unlucky enough to catch him a few years back playing halfhearted sub-Hip-Hop grooves with a motley bunch of fusion-loc musos. I breathed a sigh of relief when he kicked off tonight's performance in some style with a loose, swinging version of "Lookin' On", accompanied by a supple trio of drums, Chapman stick ("that funny lookin' ting") as Martyn described it) and keyboards.

Time has weathered Martyn's intoxicated star, honing it into an instrument that erupts in great bluesy streaks of emotion. Despite the grass-rubbing along on a rhythm loop, he

creates an intriguing landscape for the mind to wander through, but by the third piece Labradford drifted toward the dull and soporific. Well, dynamics have never been their strong point. The highlight was a lengthy all-electronic track with Bruce Gilbert spilling his sonic latte burnings into the growl's smoother textures. It puttered to a close some 30 minutes later, leaving me with the feeling they'd promised to take me somewhere, only to abandon me half way.

Musar For Airports has rightly achieved Ambient classic status, with some irony, considering End's claim that it was music to be ignored as much as listened to. But it sounds at home in a big concert hall. Like many of End's Ambient pieces, it carries a strong sense of melodic line and structure, and even a whiff of romanticism. It would be hard to imagine anyone scoring more purely textual Ambient music. I like, say, Thomas Koner's *Nunatak* (Gongauri) for chamber ensemble, but it's possible to transcribe End's piece because he makes space work within his sparse lines. Bang On A Can's version orchestrates detail within that space and adds colour to the lines, while respecting the form. The strongest section in both its original and chamber versions is the Morton Feldman-style "1/1". Here Michael Gordon's subtle scoring for cello, double bass, piano, sampler and tuned percussion added yet a musical facet to a dazzling effect.

MIKE BARNES

Dumb Type: [OR]

UK: London: Barbican Theatre

The Japanese art collective Dumb Type for whom Ryogo Ikeda now acts as the sonic wing, are a rare experience on these shores. Press information has this down as the group's UK debut, but various projects have made their way over since «Pressure [sic]» at the ICA in 1998. Founded in 1984 by Tey Furuhachi and gathering together various friends from the City University of Arts in Kyoto, studying theatre, dance, music, architecture and computer programming, they have pursued an ongoing investigation of the body's interface with new media and technologies. With titles such as *pH*, *SN* and now *[OR]* (suggested interpretations include: zero radius; and operations room), it's not hard to see the connection with Ikeda's solo work «i», the interest in binary absolutes and the technologies through which those absolutes arise, and their impact on the senses. Furuhachi died of AIDS in 1995, but a note written just before his death outlined a new, united project that would explore the border of life and death and how technology is used to define it. The outline drew on experiences of his mother's death from cancer, his brother's from a traffic accident, and his lover's from AIDS. How much the science can control this border. How much our mind can control this border. The note ends, adding "This is the border which all the humans have to confront some day. Illuminated by fleeting archlight flashes, the



astonishing singing made. Solid Air transcendent. Well-drifted lads, he quipped afterwards. It was great to hear Martyn in such good voice and how his newer material held its own next to his classics. But as the set became progressively more four-square, I longed for more of the loose-limbed approach with which Martyn opened the show.

Labradford were a disappointment. For a start, their set sounded the same as the ones they'd performed earlier in the festival. Their big, open, twangy Moricone-like guitars and bass toiling around a few keyboard chords



stage is a white operators room backed by a semicircular screen, with a single figure standing to one side. A transparent

scientifically controlled space, somewhere between an intensive care unit and the Telenovela, the solitary confinement unit in which Baader Meinhof members were imprisoned—the walls and furniture are painted white, and the light is always on.

Rory Reid's bursts of sound veer off the scale, sharp and instantaneous, annihilating time rather than marking it. Over a period it could shatter someone's identity. Faced with such absolute expressions, the senses get sick, take shelter. Figures appear on stage in the light bulbs, standing corpse-like in white patient's gowns or scurrying naked in fear. The light and the tones flash more quickly. Bodies dart hetically, glimpsed in the strobe, pummelled by a pseudo-Techno pulse. They run, slip and tumble over morgue trolleys. Living becomes dead, patient becomes nurse, light flicks to dark figures collapse in fear, crawl or roll across the floor. The control of sound and light is absolute, but its symptom is confusion.

The ensuing tableau work through the basic codes of more narrative form: a trio of figures is laid out on a display, with white figures performing their solitary musings, trying to mourn, stifle or aggravate the corpses back into life. Other sequences play on the body's part in a lethal consumer pantomime—six high school babies floating across stage like automata, manically rubbing their breasts in time to a machine loop. And snatches of desecrated stone jazz frame a picture postcard world of figures in shades slumped in matching deckchairs. The technology of reason turns out to be too much for the mind, when either suffers submissively, or seeks a holiday away from the pangs of the emergency room. In a lengthy central sequence, a solitary figure stands motionless centre-back stage, while footage shot travelling down a series of motorways is projected over her body and the stage. A restless space drive, shone onto and over a passive, corpse-like subject, the stage is ostensibly the illuminated space open to all regard. But with [O] the audience is also the target of a surgery of light and sound. The Barcelona crowd seemed a strange audience to undergo such a needling of sensory perception—most of them cosily dressed thespians, rather than renegades from Upstairs at the Garage. But only a venue slightly buzzed with caffeine-soaked and wooden shock absorbers could support such uncompromising signals. Baader's music fits so well into this scheme precisely because it can be blasted out at such extreme levels and still retain its purity. We'd like to think we can meet the contours of our own power without the muffling of meliorator, to gauge our resistance as a precise material fact. But inevitably we take flight or seek a suicidal escape into viciousness—awareness is mortally constricting and clanging like a frog's heart in a laboratory tank as it approaches its own limits.

HAFF PITCHER

The Köln Concerts 2 Germany: Cologne Stadthallen

The spotlight reveals a scraggy chaismoking man seated at a lectern. He's reading the news, which leads with an item about an air disaster involving a plane on which it downs on fire. His family were traveling. He becomes progressively distraught as he continues through the other stories of the day—Clinton/Lewinsky/Kohl and other issues tangential to all our lives. Interrupted by Fred Van Hove's piano and the Streichquartett (string quartet), our newscaster, Detlev Mues, makes a foray into the audience, mounts his lectern and scatters his cue sheets in a crescendo of despair. A masterfully performed tragicomedy, even for the sizeable minority of us in the audience for whom German is not the mother tongue.

This constituted the second of three sets on the first evening of Tony Osley's 60th birthday celebration at the Stadthallen, Cologne, an ideal venue in terms of size, ambience and organisation.

The first set was by The Original Joseph Holoboka Trio: Osley, Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars. The trio played together in the year England won the World Cup. That was an attempt to reunite the trio in California a couple of years ago. However, the logistics led to that occasion. So here they were, together again after 32 years, which is equivalent to the period *Superstar* lasts. Louis Armstrong's Hot Five recordings and Ornette Coleman's *Tomorrow Is the Question*.

The essence of the trio was there: from Bailey's opening pair of aortic chords, through Bryars's ever attentive basslines, to Osley's orchestration of time itself. There was no sense of nostalgia here, more the feel of three men resuming a conversation they had begun some time ago, while mindful that their subject matter had then been widely discussed in many languages since, and that this was a restaurant through minds enriched with subsequent, disparate experiences. Bailey and Osley have worked together in several situations over those years, notably with their own quartet, including Pat Thomas and Matt Wand. Bailey and Bryars have also collaborated occasionally since *"The Smurfs And The Rascally Rascally Brother"*. The three of them have variously worked with Braaten, Zorn, Cage, Cardew, Rollins, Bill Evans, Cecil Taylor.

For the closing set of this night, the trio was augmented by Matt Wand on electronics and special guest Bill Dixon. This was interesting stuff, with the quartet playing quite recently behind what seemed like a concerto for Rayufu Hagen. Maybe I've heard the beauty of Art Farmer and Kenny Wheeler too often to be overly impressed by the display of technical virtuosity.

The stage for Friday night was a small delight even before the musicians took their places. Chairs and cello, gongs and gamelan, and Osley's uniquely personalised



kit at front left. The Celebration Orchestra consisted of Phil Wiggins and Alex Koloszewski (violins), Peter Koch and Alford Zimmerman (cellos), Frank Grunowski, Hayden Chisholm and Ernst-Ludwig Petersen (basses and clarinet), Johannes Bauer (trumpet), Phil Minton (vocals), Sven-Ake Johansson (accordion), Fred Van Hove (basso), Pat Thomas and Matt Wand (electronics), and the percussion section of Mark Nauseef, Jo Thomas, Jochen Butner and Osley himself.

The first piece was by Bill Dixon and introduced by the composer, drawing on his extensive other career as a scholar and educator. The audience was forewarned that should a portion of the work not reflect the intention of that piece, then he may stop the music, and request an action reply. Dixon opened on solo flugelhorn mellow and dark this time, followed by Phil Minton's wonderful voice intoning: "I don't know how I made it through all those years!" The Celebration came in like New Orleans, catapulting into the next Millennium. The ensuing abrupt silence brought a second Minton declaration that led into an accordion duet. This pattern took us through a series of high quality, evocative statements on bass clarinet, Van Hove's acoustic piano, staccato strings, and Osley leading a percussive array.

Following a bleak soundscape (Minton: "I don't have a place to stay! Finally, on the coast!"), there came a rebuilding, firstly through tentative strings, constructive piano and so on, into a joyous ensemble passage. A difficult written section for the horns was cut out by Bill Dixon. Well, we'd been warned. A somewhat verbose explanation was offered for what, so those ears was a minor error in note length during a scored union section. Sadly, this cut a shadow over the remainder of the performance, not only for the audience, but for the orchestra

too, whose feelings were (well, given) noted by Matt Wand walking off.

The interval was followed by a tour-de-force by Slovenian composer/bassist Vinko Globokar, constructing his instrument from mouthpiece outwards while playing continuously. Wandering from behind Osley's kit, he immersed the trombone's bell in a large goldfish bowl atop a moist black plinth. Temporarily abandoning the instrument, a shirtless Globokar lay prone, making music from his own fleshed-out skeleton. A complete original, walking the tightrope of virtuosity with his own perfect balance.

The finale to this magnificently programmed two-day event was Tony Osley's own *A Piece For The Celebration*, for which the orchestra became an extension of the birthday boy's own drum kit. After all, he's been remodeling and adding to it for some years. As he told *Microphone Magazine*, "The most important thing for me is the enlargement of my vocabulary." This 60th birthday celebration with living proof of how far he has gone towards achieving his goal.

ANDREW SMOKE

Time Zones

Italy: Melfetta various venues

Now in its 13th year, the Time Zones festival remains content to virtual obscurity. Brian Eno, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Feia Kutz and Philip Glass have all passed through, and the elusive Enno Moriconi has become its honorary president. With such credentials how come it's managed to elude the attention of music fanatics outside Italian borders for over a decade?

Previous Time Zones have included Nurro Fatou Ali Kaba performing with Griegian chants in old Bari's cathedral, a Sub Rosa night with David Shea, Charles Hayward and

on location



Nus, and one of his last ever performances. If this year was any indication, it remarkably survives by attracting audiences consisting of ten per cent music fans and 90 per cent curiosity seeking locals. What's in it for the artists? Perhaps as his lowly defined ethos of "producing unprecedented events... and the ability to create conversations between genres" appeals to them, as Time Zones requires that musicians bring to the event a unique repertoire or collaboration to highlight their "state of musical research" — thereby allowing room for experimentation and risk. Lining up 3 of his predecessors, several music fests were staged this year, some salient one-offs among them.

The festival opened in rural seaside Mollitia with Florian Fricke's Popul Vuh performing a soundtrack installation titled *Good Rooms 1-5*. Popul Vuh's soundtrack work for film director Werner Herzog and their early Popul explorations might have changed shape, but the primary ethos remained firm in the *Good Rooms* piece. Fricke's unwavering interest in sound frequencies and the human response they produce here translated into the installation's philosophical textures and atmospheres. The *Good Rooms* theme derives from Fricke's

interest in the Orpheus legend and Julian Jaynes' discovery of a neural lobe, which is sensitive to frequencies between 2000 and 5000 hertz — the frequencies of singing oodas and bees — though it is practically dormant in modern man.

Transforming the ancient cashish surrounding Mollitia's byzantine church into rooms, the installation was designed to simulate the hallucinatory centre, as the audience proceeded through the streets at night, experiencing the series of projections and sounds (all programmed to within 2000-5000 hertz). The piece was designed to emphasize the lobe's potential rebirth through heightening the senses. "You have to listen very hard to understand, what is this?" Fricke said. "With the visual loops there's no direct story so you have to look. We want to sharpen your vision and audio senses."

Above the cobblestone streets, video monitors screened images of nature and Orpheus (represented as a projected fresco surrounded by the insects in Jaynes's research) scored with the sound of oodas and bees. Glimmering in a church courtyard, the final confrontation was with Fricke's 50 piece Human Race Choir, which hummed vocal lines derived from the composer's research. The setting and the extensions

couldn't have been more atmospherically engineered, but the crowd's confusion negated the sensory confrontation Popul Vuh were aiming for.

The following night Mollitia's byzantine church opened its doors to the less than holy John Cale. Breeding in for a semi-acoustic guitar and piano set, the intimate concert for 150 was breathtaking. Cale had left his raucousness in New York and instead focused on the beautiful simplicity of some emotive songs. Perched on the altar just under a statue of Christ, Cale, sporting a pair of devilish red suede shoes, played a selection of his co-compositions with Lou Reed, followed by a very version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah". His version of Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" was an emotional wailing machine, as was his rendition of "My Funny Valentine" and the encore of his own "Thoughtless Kind".

The venue for Anuro Suter's *Ero Project* is an ex-Italian Yout-Fascist Association building turned boxing arena turned concert hall. The classically trained pianist Suter was inspired to combine pop and classical sensibilities when he first heard The Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday". His rearrangements of *Ero* for chamber orchestra were being performed for the first time. He began with piano solos of "Roman Twilight" (Music For Film 2) and pieces from *Another Green World*. The ensemble joined Suter for "Spartanwall" and "End" (from the Apollo soundtrack) and excerpts from *Here Come The Warm Jets*. Suter's admiration for *Ero*'s worldview ("He's a restless and curious man and I think his music reflects this kind of personality") was evident in both his performance and his rearrangements. The concert certainly agreed with the audience's classical sensibilities.

What Suter did to *Ero*, New York jazz pianist Ian Cane did to Gustav Mahler. A lifelong interest in Mahler's soundworld and an effort to score a Mahler documentary prompted Cane to play with the composer's creative and destroy structure. Cane and his ensemble attempted rearrangements of his themes with explosive improvisation that took Mahler's work into the realm of freedom jazz and back. Mahler's rhythm differed

(according to Cane's interpretation) "in that you don't keep a groove... the expressiveness comes in speeding up and slowing down". The presence of Wé's DJ Olive was arousing curiosity and when Mahler samples, scratches or atmospheres were mixed in with the compositions, it gave the audience the strange experience of a new musical layer eerily referencing itself. The interaction of the ensemble (drawn from New York's downtown jazz community) on excerpts from Mahler's first and fifth symphonies was remarkable.

The Time Zones night billed as London's Shockwave show, added some innovative club sensibilities rarely seen even in London. Highlighting the pervasive sense of media cross-fertilisation, it brought together the "fuselage" of Outside featuring Kid Loops, the sling sextet Instrumental, and multimedia boy-wonders AnRoRo. Known for their string accompaniments on The Orb's "Dobow Lakes" and 4 Hero's Two Pages, plus their brilliant live interpretations of dance classics, Instrumental played to an astounded audience, who'd probably never heard "Little Riffy Clouds" before, but nevertheless reacted to the sensitive essence the group elicited from songs like Orbital's "Tresor", P-Moay's "Hymn" and The Shamen's "Re-Evolution". Ryuichi Sakamoto's "1919" and End's "Spartanwall" were played interactively with AnRoRo's sound software program Phase. With a grid for each instrument projected above, the musicians played the notes that appeared on screen with live improvisational changes mixed in live. The playful irony of interfacing electronic classics arranged on strings and replayed via live sequencing software left chills on the floor.

Collaborations continued as Instrumental's Everton Nelson provided the strings for Outside's set of Electro-jazz. Andrew Allen and Kid Loops dropped the beats for Matt Cooper's roasting piano and percussive jams. With fierce live renditions of "Don't Know Who I Am", "Turnmigration" and "Revelation" taken from their *Saporous* album, Outside's live energy was so infectious they played on for three and a half hours.

ANDREA COVINGTON

pole
 plastikman
 rothko

SCRATCH and Thu19NOV/m WIRE

Open-Door Music
 28 (St. Anne) Young Building, 0171 728 5215 fax 0171 728 5111
 100% of the profits from this event go to the charity of your choice.

new notes at a glance

information from spnm

new notes, the monthly listings magazine published by spnm, is an essential guide to what's happening in new music.

Events listed in full in new notes are summarised on this page.

In November we're at the Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music with electronic music and new works for members of the Steve Martin Band and we're also in London with the BBC Singers. Call us for more details!

1 LSO

Adams**

BS

Gemini

Granger** Hudders***
Hobbs*** Smith, Parsons
KCM Theatre The Mall, London
MPT 0171 580 5645

2 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Bachmann*** Mendelssohn,
Bruckner
NH

4 Pipers Three

André Thibaut, Baggett,
Arceid, Morley, Pinnaz***
Renan, Leigh, Burnell***
St Bride Church, Fleet St, London
E1 4 0000 79 2415

PTM5: Tribute to Satie

Satie, J. White

CH PFM

6 PTM2: Feldman's

For Philip Guston*

CH PFM

Philharmonia Orchestra

London

BNH

Dead Glamorous - Film and Music

Mum, Vivid, Bar, Barber,
Moran, Poppy
Cherryhill Hall, Gloucester Road
Bath BA1 01225 403642

7 PTM3: Speak/Sing/Play

L. Ball**

CH PFM

Dmitri Smirnov 50th Birthday Concert

Smirnov**

St George's Church, Lambeth, London
SE1 0171 580 5645

8 Gemini with Alison Wells, soprano

Mansour**, S. Harnett**

Wilmans***

Luxembourg*** Beethoven,
Kage***, Sanderson**
H.4

10 Music Theatre

Bertrando

Exposure Theatre, Lambeth
Bath BA1 01225 403642

11 London Sinfonietta with Evan Parker

JA

PTM4: John Tilbury plays early Terry Riley

CH PFM

12 Martin Baker, organ

Mendelssohn, Decker,
Lokker, Baker
St Andrew's Church, Hallow,
London EC4 0171 580 5645

Delta Saxophone Quartet

JA

Desert III - Landscape

Mc Cabe

BNH

Orchestra of St John's, Smith Square

Woolch, Strauss, Walton,
Beethoven
JA

RNCM Henze Festival Seminar/workshop

RNCM

13 PTM5: Yonty Solomon, piano

Live, Soraja, L. Ball*** T. Riley**
CH PFM

RNCM 90 Heroes***

Beethoven
RNCM

14 BBC Philharmonic

Beethoven**

RNCM

15 PTM6: Collective Phenomena

L. Ball, live collaborative
partners

Radio 3 Concert House, St Paul Rd,
London N1P 0171 580 5645

Paupha

Shady, Cage, Druckman**

RNCM

SCMG

Matthews, Weir, Bainbridge**
Schwartz, Gruber
CRO Green, Bently Lane
Birmingham B1 0121 250 5622

Gemini

Bryers, Cooper, Westbrook,
Weston, Bradenich
JCA

16 Cheltenham Contemporary Concerts

Hoyes*** Pritchard**

Finney*** Rhys, Llewellyn,
Scott, Scamm

Two Hall, Imperial Square
Cheltenham GL50 01245 327799

17 The Chameleon Ensemble

Butler, Webb*** Hold, Bridge,
Weir, Grange
BAC

18 PTM7: Keith Barnard, Nancy Rutter et al (2 concerts)

Impression, Barnard***
Berg, Mass, New Deal Square
London NW1 0171 580 5645

A New Look

Reich, Alvarez, Montague**
Cage, Giffard, Fox
Gower Hall, Asquith Museum of
Bristol 01274 874161

19 Anna Page, organ

Platt***, Bach, Martin,
Hendel, Monod

St Andrew's Church, Hallow,
London EC4 0171 580 5645

RNCM C20th Ensemble

Schönberg, Folkert, Forbes,
Stockhausen
The British Theatre, RCM, Prince
Concert Hall, London SW6
0171 580 5645

Music by Frank Stiles

Stiles
BNH

20 PTM8: Terry Riley solo piano & vocals

CH PFM

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Shostakovich Nergiz**

BNH

*21 spnm at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

Ged*** MacKay, Jones**
Green*** Hodson*** Prior,
Ingold***

St Thomas's Church, Birstall
Bath, Huddersfield NH
01484 150026

21 Goldsmiths: London in Antichthon

Borodin, Weber, Glav**

Balaban
Goldsmiths Coll., London W6
London E14 0171 519 7645

22 Bill Bright Cecilia

Howe*** at Wilkinsons,
Britten, Charbon*** Boyle,
Boyce*** at Wilkinsons
ANM

Alfieri Orchestra

Fras, Busch, Keeling, Mozart
Frasco Magnifico Hall,
University College of St Martin,
London 01245 770585

Darkness Visible

Hall*** Feldman, Carter
QJM

23 Del Niente

Kurtz, Feldman,
Lachmann, Wolf, Kurlik,
Feldman
The Great Hall, King College,
London WC2 0181 596 3816

English Chamber Orchestra

Schubert, Mozart,
Szyman***
QJM

Philip Glass Ensemble

Riggio/Glass
BNH

24 Marco Polo

Tan Dun**
BNH

25 RAM String Orchestra

Egar, Mozart, Weber**
Tchikovsky
RAM, Marylebone Hall, London
NW1 0171 875 7300

25 Cambridge New Music Players

Britten, Ligeti, Caplan**

The Williams Museum, Great
Pembury Street, Bath BA1
01225 483362

26 The Personal Touch

Couperin, Gner
St Andrew's Church, 7 St Andrew's
Lane, London EC4
0171 580 5645

American Piano Music

Dresher***, Feldman, Adams
Adams Book Hall, Riverside Plaza,
Birmingham B1 0121 260 5622

The Desert Music

Zappa, Beckett, Crawford,
Singer, Reich
BNH

Music of Arvo Pärt & Erkki-Sven Tüür

Pärt, Tüür
QJM

*27 BBC Singers

spnm day
works from the spnm
shortlist**

Andrews, Coore, St Michael,
Bath, London W9
0171 580 5645

Harry Partch's Original Invented Instruments

Partch, Drummond
BNH

28 Elliott Carter 90th Birthday Concert

Carter**
BNH

30 Double Bass 2: Great Britain

Hedge, Cavanah, Moore,
Pinnaz, Pennington,
The Great Hall, King College,
London WC2 0171 875 7629

London Chamber Group

Bailey, Burnell, Spence,
Taylor, Spots, Goss, Parsons,
Cage
Canvey Hall, Red Lane Square
London W1 0171 278 4197

KEY:

*9 spnm event

** World Premiere

*** UK Premiere

* London Premiere

BMC, British Music
Information Centre,
Savoy Place, London WC1
0171 490 8167

KCM, K.A. Theatre, The Mall,
London W1 0171 580 5645

JSS, St John's Smith Square,
London W1 0171 232 1061

PTM: Planet Time Music
Festival, Tivoli Hall, 415 420

RFL, RFL, RFL,
South Bank Centre, London
SE1 0171 580 4342

RNCM: Royal Northern College
of Music, Oxford Road,
Manchester M13
0161 967 5788 or 5779

spnm

PROMOTING NEW MUSIC

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out there

November's selected live events, club spaces and broadcasts



On stage

Charlie Becher & Band Performing *Desert Caninos*, specially commissioned music for an evening of experimental cinema from Joan Gaele, Kenneth Anger and others. Bath University Hall 6 November 7.30pm 01225 826431

Djange Bates & Quiet Nights Brit jazz luminary presents his softer, more reflective side. Manchester RNOH 17 November 7.30pm 01210 0161 907 5278

Karrison Burrows Music Theatre Wales performs the composer's infamously brutalist opera *Punch And Judy*. Bath Kingwood Theatre, 10 November 7.30pm 01225 826431

Bjork The ice maiden cometh. Manchester Apollo 25 November. Birmingham Symphony Hall 127. London Palladium 299

Peter Dinklage Launching his new *Refit* album with Chris Cutler and John Greaves. London Wexham, 3 November 0181 771 1063

Ntshuku Bongela's Tshololoso Traditional South African songs. Cuban music and booming free jazz from the SA ex-pat saxophone and group. Brighton Solis Berny Theatre, 28 November 58.56 01273 6430102

Backfunk 3000 + Endemic Void Si Begg headlines this Language Records night, which also features DJs from Germany's Chrome label and Tony Thorpe. London Upstairs at the Garage, 6 November 5pm-3am 0171 607 1818

Loi Coxhill + 46,000 Fibres + Nik Turner + Ted Milford Freeform improvisation session from ubiquitous saxophonist blowing off with the Haverford man and Blunt blowers. London Red Rose Club, 8 November. Btm 54/53, 0171 268 7265

Dr John + Ole Dana New Orleans blues veteran on the road, with support from avant-blues trumpet. Glasgow FringeMarket 13 November. Manchester FOM 1141

Fun-Du-Montal + Bakshi Javid Salamat Qawal Traditional Asian music meets its fiery English bastard son. London Brix 16 November. Brentford Watermans Arts Centre 11.31

James Hardyway Quintet + Wüchman Live, jazzy drum 'n' bass from Hardyway's energetic group plus the Birmingham boys' spectral breakbeats. London Subterania, 5 November, 3pm, 56/55, 0181 960 4590

Kate Ridsdill Death Ambient bassist brings his loathe numble to Club Integral, with support from Dief Trip Conscious. London Ussons of the Garage, 1 November. Btm, 55 0121 607 1818

Richard R Kirk + TM Einshet Dark Electro from the ex-Cabaret Voltaire man plus Neobuster's Plutonic mix with the metal London Garage 8 November, 58 0171 607 1818

High Llamas + Jim O'Rourke + Schneider TM + Stoch, Hansen + Walkman One-off date to mark the release of the Llamas' remix LP *Lo La Rossa*. London Improv Theatre 11 November, 0171 228 6612

High Rise Asahito Nango's Tokyo power into roar into town. London Dublin Castle, 4 November 55, 0171 485 1773

Live Batts + Loi Coxhill/John Edwards/Stere Noble + Ticklish The opening night of a new London club space, *Contraband*, for experimental improvised/electronic music. Features John White's *Casa Invisible*, inspired from Loi Coxhill and mates, samplets, ticklish, plus films, videos and DJs. London Lewisham Art House, 14 November, 55/53 50 0171 277 7856

John Mayer's Indo-Jazz Fusions Volker Meyer and his all-new young group of multiculti raga-boppers. Bath University Hall 18 November 7.30pm, 58 01225 826431

Muzikás + Marti Sebestyén Traditional Hungarian ensemble perform folk arrangements by Béla Bartók. Bath University Hall 18 November, 7.30pm, 58 01225 826431

Pete Namlook + Alquimia + Modibus Just when you thought the Fair supernos had disappeared into the void, he comes back for a set of live electronic ambience. London LA2 4 November, 8pm-midnight, 59 50 0171 434 0403

Ive Fereiman + The Remote Viewers

A must for sad addicts with the highly touted Brazilian tenors and the Prog rock/eth jazz trio. London SPS, 12 November, Btm, 58/57 0171 247 9747

Pete Ube David Thomas's Cleveland punks are still fighting. Quin Mean Fiddler 25 November. London LA2 1261

Eddie Prevost + Evan Parker Two elder statesmen of improv don't miss their recent *Matchless*. CD *Hot Moment*. London Puncell Room 18 November, 7.30pm, 58/55 0171 960 4242

Pulp Everyone's favourite chartbound art pop combo hit the road. Hereford Leisure Centre 17 November. London Wembley Arena 221. Manchester Apollo 251. Stoke Trenton Gardens 261. Doncaster Dome 281. Hull Arena 291. Glasgow SECC 130

Radio Art Four concerts and two debates on the state of academic art in Britain and Germany, with discussion and sound diffusion by Katharine Norman, Evelyn Foran, Lutz Gendarm and Chris Cutler. Phil England, Peter Cusack and more. London Gower Institute, 30 October-7 November. 0171 411 3441

Simon Rattle To coincide with the publication by Index On Censorship of the book *Smothered Hits: Banned Music Of The World*, the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's conductor makes a rare appearance playing



piano for an evening of 'banned music' including Oliver Messiaen's *Quartet For The End Of Time*. London Union Chapel, 16 November 8pm, 53/515, 0171 439 1783

Henry Rollins Spoken word tour for rock's Iron John. London Barbican 19 November. Glasgow Pavilion 1101. Dublin Warf Street 20-21. Bristol Colston Hall 231. Oxford Apollo 241. Derby Assembly Rooms 1251. Manchester Academy 271. Birmingham Alexandra Theatre 281. Norwich USA 291. Warwick Arts Centre 301. Newcastle University 12 December. Sheffield Octagon

131. London Actons 14-16

Raina Two nights of Prog-improv mayhem from the out-there Japanese duo, who've invited guest Ron Anderson of US outfit The Molecules, and others to be revealed on the nights. Local noisiks. Guapo support. London Upstairs at the Garage, 21-22 November. 0181 963 0940

Robyn Schulkowsky + Derek Bailey American percussionist Schulkowsky and guitar innovator Bailey pool resources. London Vortex, 8 November 57/55, 0171 254 6516

Something Else, at Newcastle Live Theatre, 4 November, 8pm 57/50 0191 232 1232

Sound Mountain Music inspired by the people of Mongolia, with Michael Ormeson and group. London Church of the Holy Innocence, 22 November, 8pm, 57/55 0181 291 1089

Jon Spencer's Blues Explosion RBB covers trash the place while promoting their new LP *Acne*. London Sheddards Bush Empire 27 November 0171 771 2000

Surface Noise Artangel presents live performance on a double discer bus driving around London by Scanner (performing, not driving the bus) made up of sounds gathered on DAT after a walk around the same route 12-14 November. For full details, call Artangel 0171 637 2994

Transglobal Underground World MusicHouse fusioners supporting: eem, windy rock, jada, Page and Plant. Glasgow SECC 12 November. Manchester Nymex Arena 31, Wembley Arena 15 and 61 0171 379 1313

Trevor Watts Moiré Music Drum Orchestra More polyrhythmic power plays from the veteran World Innoise. Oxford 54. Bunkaid Church, 27 November, Btm, 01865 191 355

Norona Wastons + Kenny Wanelez UK premiere of Wheeler's new mix of jazz and poetry. Muros. Manchester RNOH 5 November, 7.30pm 612/610 0161 907 5278



James Hardyway



Club Spaces

Baltic Nu Electro from guests James Lovell (13 November) and Krash Slaughter (27) Liverpool Le Balloir Fridays, 10pm-1am \$6/\$5, 0151 709-6508

Bunko Morph London's classical music (and then some) but presents nights mixing breakfasts with Minimalism, Easy Listening, soundtracks and more. Zohar Sound System (Thursdays) @v-Rumpus Room DJ Rob Lo (Fridays) Subversion (Saturdays) London Bunko free call 0171 916-0595 for times

Cosmo Featuring the tough Chicago Acid style of Hardfloor's Oliver Bondzio plus CJ Boland, Colin Faver, Paul Van Vleet and more London Open 13 November, 10pm-6am \$10/\$B, 0171 240-8050

Digital Discharge Dysfunctional audio abuse and vinyl pynotronics from V/MT and cronies including Aki Alai Manchester Star And Garter, 5 November Bpm-1ate 0836 599 600

Extraordinary Sensations The blunted sound of Vienna from Kruder & Dorfmeister, plus live nu-jazz from Torino London Blue Note, 6 November \$10/\$B 0171 837 6900

Funkit Electro breaks and bass from Barry Ashworth, Lol Hammond, Bales Bailey and Howe B London Mass, 21 November, 9:30pm-Sam, \$7/\$B 0171 403-2264

The Hidden Wicked Classic reggae, HipHop and contemporary Electronica from Frankster DJs MK Ultra, Pete Yik and Xaver with guests DJ Staz (6 November) Ben Wilcox (20) and Kilo Darge (27) London Priests, Fridays 9pm-2am \$6/\$4 0171 7226-6979

Interstellar Fugitives DJs from legendary Detroit Techno collective Underground Resistance in an ultra-rare UK appearance Central London location (call for details) 27 November 10pm-Sam \$10 0171 336-8313

Kosmische Krautrock from DJs Tom Totel and Roger Wilco plus Electric Sound Of Joy live London Garage, 20 November 9:30pm-3am \$5/\$4, 0171 385 6171

Legends Of The Dark Black Presenting The Groove Connection Tour featuring Jungtoss Groovendoer, Fabio Ray Keith, Jumpin' Jack Frost, plus resident DJs Brighton The Zip 17 November \$7/\$0 01 273 8884-6888

Lost Highly recommended minimal Techno night with Active Hawtin and Slave Becknell Central London location (call for details) 28 November 10pm-6am, 0171 991 0402

NY Sushi Steel-edged Techno grooves, jump-up Jungle and Nu School breakfast with Moving Shadow DJs (7 November) Ashley Seedle (13) Pestay Photok and Andrea Parker (21) and Andrew Weatherall, Alinka Islam and Westbam (27) Sheffield Unit, weekly Fridays, 10pm-3am, and Birmingham Bonds, weekly Saturdays, 10pm-2am 0114 267 1869

Oakland Cuts HipHop turntable science from Japanese guest DJs London Notting Hill Art Club, 14 November Bpm-1am \$5/\$3, 0181 570 3028

Open The Kosmische couples team up with Lo Recordings for an evening of live electronics from Rothko, Twisted Science Richard Thomas and The Improv outfit Hairy Butler London George IV, 27 November

Organized Sound Andrea Parker, Berlin DJ Torment, and resident DJs Vadem, Sufin Dellemont and Charlie Dark (Amca Blues) play 50-60 jazz and blues tunes London Notting Hill Art Club, 4 November, Bpm-1am \$5/\$4 0171 460-4459

Safe Asian underground night featuring Talem Singh the Outcaste collective and Earthrise performing live London Club 333, 15 November Bpm-Sam, 0171 359-4026

Scratch Berlin's Pole and Canada's Richie Hawtin/Plakoman play live as Scratch relocates to Bristol, South London Ambient bass trio Rithko support, alongside Scratch DJs and Disko visual London Mass, 19 November, Bpm-2am, \$8/\$6 in advance from Rough Trade and Atlas Records 0171 238 6616

The Sprawl Stefan Schneider of To Rococo Rot's a soundtrack with Soul Source's Sound! DJ (12/29 October) Spiky Records Pic night (5 November), David Heringsway (12), plus residents 5-10:30 Bb and Bb Tonic on all nights London Global Cafe Thursdays, 7:30pm-midnight, free 0171 700 7569

Super Stereo Groove: Groovendoer and The Scratch Patrols, plus Ross Alai (GBR) in a sound system standoff London Mass, 27 November 10pm-late, \$10-6 \$6 0171 737 7616

Vector Abstract Electronica from residents Mr Knapp Ed Thirst Basic Unit (Moving Shadow) and friends, plus guest mix from The Wiv's Peter McIntyre Leeds Plus for details call 0113 275 7994

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1

John Peel Sundays-Thursday 6:40-10:30pm The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions

Giles Peterson Thursdays midnight-2am Up- and down tempo beats, experimental drum 'n' bass, funk, psychedelic soul, and plenty more in between

Fabio & Groovendoer Fridays 2-4am Two hours of fast-breaking drum 'n' bass

Westwood Rap Show Fridays 11pm-2am Saturdays 9pm-midnight Tents feed breaking HipHop tips

Annie Nightingale Sundays 4-6:30am Chillout, eclectic sounds for apres clubbers, early trailers and/or insinuations

BBC Radio 3

Mixing It Thursdays 10:45-11:30pm Eclectic mix of music and discourse from Robert Santal and Mark Russell

Hear And Now Fridays 10-12pm Contemporary music magazine interviews record reviews sessions

Portrait Of Jazz Saturdays 6-6:30pm repeated Fridays 12:30-1am Charles Shaw Murray presents a documentary series on the life of the star-crossed bass player (14-26 November)

Jazz On 3 Saturdays 11:30pm-1am Modern jazz recorded in concert. This month: Joey Baron (7 November), Jaco Pastorius's World Of Mouth Big Band recorded live in 1982 (14) Joseph Bowie Big Bass (28)

World Music Sundays 11:15-11:45pm Ethnic explorations via field recordings. This month the continuation of The Sacred Music Of India

Regional

BBC Derby

Soundscapes Sundays 3-5pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental Electronica contemporary classical systems music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Boss Allen Wednesdays 8-10:30pm Topical Techno, Electro, Big Beats and drum 'n' bass

Charlie Gillett Saturdays 7-8pm Rock, roots, rock World Music, blues, R&B and more

BBC Lancashire

On The Wire Saturdays 7-8pm Steve Barker's wild New Music mix, dub, experimental electronics, old rock, free improv and more

BBC Manchester

The Late World Noise Sundays midnight-2am Out rock, psychedelia, Jungle, avant garde warped Ambient and global grooves in themed sequences

BBC Milton Keynes

The Garden Of Earthly Delights Fridays 10pm-1am Shane Quent's blend of avant rock to electronic music, with bizarre soundbites

BBC Newcastle

Planet Thompson Fridays 10:30pm-11:30pm The perfect prescription for alternative music in the North West, 100% intelligent Techno, HipHop, post-rock and more

BBC Nottingham

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Russell Wednesdays 10pm-midnight Latest drum 'n' bass spun by the master

Give It Up Wednesdays midnight-3am Weekly guest mixes

Colin Dale Thursdays 10pm-midnight Minimal Techno and concrete House

Frost and Hyde Thursdays midnight-2am More breakfast than it's chilly the most Solid State Sundays 3-5am Coldcut, DJ Food and irregular guests dig through the crates

The Chill Out Zone Saturdays 6-8pm Paul Thomas's experimental Electronica mix

Patrick Forge Sundays 8-10pm Eclectic jazz-rock-jazz mix

4 Hero Sundays 10pm-midnight Jazz, Jungle, cyber-soul breakfasts, electrified grooves from the Reinforced duo and guests

BBC (Brighton)

Totally Wired (day) 1pm-1am Leftfield, indie, comedy, radio art with local punk Mike Beadhead and friends

Beat Break Fridays 10-11pm DJ C2 and DJ Quantum spin continuous drum 'n' bass, with a different guest DJ every week

Chil Factor Sundays 5-7am Clive Crosse plays Electronica, Techno, dub, post-rock, experimental Ambient and other desolate dissonance

Back Issues

Details of all available back issues, and a searchable database of contents of issues after 100, are available on **The Wire Website: www.dfuse.com/the-wire**
 Full, downloadable articles from sold out issues are added every month

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- 102 **Reverend & The Makers**, Jon Anderson, S. Dharma, Delirious, S. Dharma, Delirious
- 103 **The Song & The Sound**, Jon Anderson, S. Dharma, Delirious, S. Dharma, Delirious
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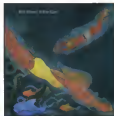
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epiphanies

For Mike Barnes, life would have been a bummer, were it not for *Ummagumma*

The Big Bang came aged 12. The shock wave that followed blew me onto a 25-year course of playing music. Which in turn explains why I'm sitting here committing these words to print rather than counting the spoils of a sensible career. Few people besides Mozart had an advanced musical taste at that age and I was no exception. Mine was for the popular classics, music from shows like *South Pacific* and a smattering of pop. Buying Herb Alpert's *This Guy's In Love With You* seemed a logical step. I proudly told my friend Mike, "What? You bought it, or your parents bought it?" He asked disdainfully, "I did," I replied, and in an instant realised what 'uncool' meant.

Mike's brother Ant was the local 'head' seven years older than us, tall, skinny, shoulder-length corkscrew hair, billowing loon pants. Their family was affluent, friendly and accommodating. They had a big house in Norech and a stereo to match. It was the first place I saw a pepper mill. We soon became best friends and a group regularly convened at Mike's place on Saturday evenings to play records from brother Ant's collection.

The first thing I remember Mike putting on was Pink Floyd's 1969 double album *Ummagumma*. It had been out a few years already, but I knew virtually nothing about them. I dimly recall he played side three's "Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict", which to these still untanned ears sounded like a nocturnal cabaret of demure chipmunks gatecrashed by a Scottish drunk. But first, we had to negotiate Rick Wright's 13 minute "Syzyphus". What I heard was a huge, eerie mellotron and tympani theme, a splintered discordant piano solo, shadowy abstract forms, animal cries, nebulous sounds from other worlds. Then a cacophonous undergrowth of vanished tapes, out of which the main theme loomed like a monolith.

"Syzyphus" epitomises *Ummagumma*, the apogee of psychedelia and/or self-indulgence run amok. Those viewpoints were unknown to me at the time, as were Cecil Taylor and Varese, to whom the piece was later compared. But my predilection for *Cosmo Royale* was about to be destroyed. Indeed, my tastes were so half-formed that I barely noticed them being blasted away by these new sounds that left a delicious feeling of disturbance in their wake.

I grew to love the rest of the album, especially the incandescent space rock of "Set The Controls For

Heart Of The Sun". Ant's collection also introduced me to Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*, King Crimson and more Pink Floyd, but it was *Ummagumma* that held me, challenging me to grasp its essence. Cycling off in the dark to meet friends at the Blotfield Village Bonfire Party, a chunk had broken off Pink Floyd's universe and was whirling like a nebula inside my adolescent head. Everything looked different now. Life would never be the same again.

Back on Earth, Mike and I were part of a group of guitarists struggling with their Tune-A-Day tutor books, refusing to admit we had little aptitude for the instrument. After many sore-fingered hours sequestered in the bedroom (so as not to disturb the neighbours) playing "Au Clair De La Lune", I worked out the three-note bassline to "Set The Controls". I also

for two acoustic guitars with whisky miniature bottles as slides, a bell borrowed from my parents' mantelpiece, a cuckoo pipe, a recorder, anything we could find. Nothing if not resourceful, we also had a wind powered electric organ. The fact that the fan was almost louder than the instrument wasn't too big a handicap given its utterly unmusical owner, who moved his hands randomly over the keyboard. But it sounded good. I named the piece "Heaven".

Keen for public recognition, we appropriated a tape machine from the classroom cupboard and played "Heaven" during break time. But we held back its sequel, "Hell", which even we realised was quite appalling. The beautiful, willowy Christine Deeny approached me. "It sounds like Pink Floyd," she said. I reddened, both with excitement from her proclamation

and because she was actually talking to me. The intention we got for using the tape machine was a small price to pay. Most of the group would probably have dismissed the music if it wasn't theirs, and some lost interest once we'd recorded it. Plainly, they lacked my level of commitment. For them it was just something to do. But maybe Pink Floyd feel the same about *Ummagumma*. Apparently, they'd be quite happy to have it surgically removed from the Floyd body of work. Yet it's their most exploratory album, precisely because they were then prepared



discovered that by turning the guitar over and drumming on the back I could do a passable imitation of Nick Mason's tom-tom mantra. I'd cracked the Floyd rhythm section!

At last I was ready. Aged 13, I formed a group with Mike to play our own music. The only snag was, none of us could play chord sequences — or much else, come to that. Besides, we were short on instruments. But the will to express through noise was irresistible. Some friends could actually manage a few blues licks by now, but we lacked a game plan and the vocabulary to emulate any of our heroes. So we often ended up playing free improvisation by default, or at least when one of us suddenly slipped into a different metre, and the rest of us would have off after him as best we could. Calling ourselves Branchlid, we recorded the results on Mike's mono reel-to-reel when his parents were out.

One of our earliest pieces was a rhythmless splurge

to cuckoo risks and overreach themselves. They also admitted that they weren't particularly good musicians. Well, they had that much in common with Branchlid.

Once Pink Floyd released the plodding *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which they are still proud of, my interest in them began to wane. Branchlid had the good grace to disintegrate before lapsing into mediocrity, just as we were beginning to play reasonably well. I moved with my parents to Hampshire and took up playing drums.

Eight years ago I bumped into Mike in London. During the awkward conversation he announced himself "happily married" and working in magazine distribution. I gave him my phone number, but had to ask him for his. What would he make of "Heaven" now, or *Ummagumma*? Squirm in excruciating embarrassment, probably. He never called, of course, which is a shame. I'd still like to thank him for helping me get where I am today, though I'm not sure he'd understand why

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